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# Wonderful

Exploring intergenerational Worship

By Karen Holford

For everyone who longs to experience the  
ultimate in multisensory, spontaneous, creative,  
intergenerational, and eternal worship that  
God is planning for us in heaven!

# *Contents*

Introduction. . . . .	05
The Parable of the Celebration. . . . .	07
What Is Intergenerational Worship? . . . . .	12
Ten Reasons for Holding Intergenerational Worship Services in Your Church. . . . .	20
From Eden to Everlasting . . . . .	22
Understanding Jesus' Theology of Childhood . . . . .	31
Jesus—Intergenerational Worship Leader . . . . .	37
Ellen White and Intergenerational Worship . . . . .	41
How Our Learning Style Influences Our Worship Experience . . . . .	44
Different Models of Intergenerational Worship . . . . .	53
Preparing the Ground. . . . .	79
The Big Questions About Intergenerational Worship. . . . .	86
When And Where Shall We Worship Together? . . . . .	95
Let's Create an Intergenerational Worship Service! . . . . .	99
Who's in Your Pews? . . . . .	113
Social Media Tools for Busy Teams . . . . .	121
Building an Intergenerational Worship Team . . . . .	127
Sixty Simple Ways to Involve Children in Your Church Service Right Away . . . . .	139
Sample Intergenerational Worship Service – Gifted! . . . . .	152
How Did It Go? Inviting And Managing Feedback. . . . .	158
Recipe for Making a World . . . . .	162
The Lord's Prayer with Actions . . . . .	164
Useful Resources for Intergenerational Worship. . . . .	166



# *Introduction*

WHEN I FIRST DISCOVERED intergenerational worship, I felt liberated and inspired. All my own struggles and thoughts and passions and concerns about the way we often worship in our church services suddenly made sense. Here was a way to worship together, and to learn together what it means to be part of the body of Christ. This was a way to acknowledge and enjoy our unique gifts and differences as we come together, as one, to worship our Father and Creator, God.

I left the short, inspiring, multisensory and worshipful service, went outside and sat in the sun, just letting the experience soak through me. Suddenly I realized what I had been hungry for all my life. I had enjoyed most of the church services in the town where I'd grown up, but I'd always yearned for more creativity, more active involvement, and more things to look at to help me understand the spiritual concepts. For some reason I'd also felt kind of 'wrong' for feeling this small, but gnawing, discontent with the way church was, as if that made me less adequate as a Christian, or less spiritual...

Today intergenerational worship services are growing as more people are taking the time to reflect on what it means to worship as a family before God. We're also studying the way in which people worshipped in the Bible, and learning that our worship services have been based more on tradition and culture than on any Biblical patterns or styles.

Many churches are discovering the benefits of intergenerational worship. Their churches begin to grow, people who left come back and bring their children. Grandchildren want to come to church with their grandparents. People are happier inviting their friends to church, especially those with families and children. The different generations learn to treasure and respect each other. There is more joy and less isolation in church. Everyone experiences the worship in ways that makes sense to their way of learning. More people are involved in the service and they feel that their gifts are valued. Children learn that they are special, and that their needs are also considered and met.

Together everyone learns what it means to love and be loved and to grow in community, so that God's relational image is experienced in every church service.

This book explores both the 'why' and the 'how' of intergenerational worship. It provides a simple history of worship through the Bible, an exploration of Jesus' theology of childhood, and His own approach to intergenerational worship. It also contains practical information: how to start thinking about intergenerational worship; how to build an intergenerational worship team; how to create an intergenerational worship service; why it's important to use various styles of learning activity; how to evaluate the service; different models for intergenerational worship and some useful resources.

There is also an emphasis in this book on including children, not because intergenerational worship services are just for children, but because we have ignored their needs for so long that we have lots to learn about helping them to experience worship in a way that is meaningful to them. We have also deprived ourselves of the inspiration and gifts that they can bring to our worship services.

This is also intended to be a practical guide. By the time you reach the end of the book you'll have the resources and ideas to run at least three different intergenerational worship services on Creation, The Story of The Lost Sheep and The Parable of the Talents.

May everyone in your church, from 1-100, be inspired by your desire to make your church services truly intergenerational and a reflection of the unimaginable intergenerational worship that God is planning for us in heaven!

Karen Holford

# *The Parable of the Celebration*

THERE WAS ONCE A VILLAGE where something wonderfully amazing happened. The Event was so beautiful, so pure and so wondrous. It was a gift of God's incredible love, just for them. It was so good and great that the villagers decided to hold a Celebration on the same day, every single week, to make sure they never forgot how wonderful God was. They wanted The Celebration to be for everyone, to involve everyone and to be enjoyed by everyone, because that would be the very best way to celebrate His wonderful love for everyone.

At first they met every week in the forest-fringed meadow where they sang songs of joy and praise. They encouraged each other and ate together. The villagers brought along their simple picnics to share: homemade bread, tasty soups, delicious sandwiches, fresh fruit, and sometimes even little cakes for a very special treat. But the food wasn't as important as just being together and sharing in God's love. The children ran around in the meadow, picking flowers, chasing butterflies, eating homemade bread, being kind, and listening to the older people's inspiring stories. The young people debated, asked questions, explored, made friends and played their guitars. At the end of the day they all sang soaring songs as they watched the sun set in rosy gorgeousness behind the hills. Everyone loved The Celebration! It was the best day of the week, because it was all about God's love for each and every person, and each and every person's love for God. And it was a time when every single person felt loved and gifted and cherished and special.

But the Event had been so amazing and so wonderful that the villagers decided to improve their simple celebrations by turning them into fancy feasts. The best bakers baked the tastiest bread and cakes. The best chefs cooked the most elaborate food. They moved the feast into the freshly-painted village hall. The best hostesses laid the most elegant tables, covered in snowdrifts of pure white linen, sparkling

silverware, and beautiful dishes. Everything had to be just perfect. No more picnics on the grass! That wasn't quite special enough for The Celebration.

The grown-ups thought the feasts were wonderful! They dressed in their best and worked hard to make everything perfect. The children were taught to be quiet and still and not interrupt the intellectual, adult conversations with their childish chatter and innocent insights. So they sat still on the adult-shaped chairs, in their stiffly-starched, best clothes. They were hungry, but they didn't enjoy asparagus in hollandaise sauce and spinach and squash risotto. They wanted simple, familiar food, like homemade bread, tasty soups, delicious sandwiches, fresh fruit and the occasional little cake. Sometimes the children were given a tiny special treat, just for them, but it wasn't really enough to satisfy their deep, rumbling hunger.

Everyone soon forgot how The Celebration started. The children grew up learning that The Celebration wasn't really for them. No one thought about what the children needed to eat or what the children enjoyed. *They* were no longer important. It was all about the adults feeding adults with sophisticated adult food and sophisticated adult conversation.

One day some of the children slid quietly down off their seats, and crawled under the table, looking for something to eat. Some of them crept outside. It was a long time before the grown-ups even realized



they were missing! One little boy was found in a pigpen eating pigswill with the pigs. And another little girl was found eating yesterday's leftovers from someone's garbage bin.

One of the grown-ups said, 'Children shouldn't eat pig food and garbage! We're having The Celebration and you should eat adult food with the rest of us!'

Another grown up said 'Yes, adults always know what's best for children! You need to copy what we do, because we're the only ones who know how to celebrate properly!'

Suddenly a stranger appeared. No one was quite sure where he came from, or how he came to be there that day. But he took the hand of the muddy little boy who'd been found in the pigpen and he knelt down next to him in the middle of the crowd.

Then he looked up at the adults and said, 'if you really want to know the best way to celebrate, you need to learn from the children. The Celebration is just as much for them as it is for you. Stop thinking that you're better than the children because you're older and more educated and because you know everything. Stop thinking that The Celebration is really only for you. Children notice beautiful things that you can't see. Children love without judging. Children are inspired. Children have special gifts that they can use to bless you, too. Don't despise them and disregard them. They are so special that their guardian angels are constantly in the presence of God. Children worship God in their own way and He delights in their noisy liveliness, because that's exactly how He created them to be... So, if you want to have a village that is still holding The Celebration in a hundred years time, remember the lovely way you started, or you'll find more of your children in pigpens and garbage bins.'

The grown-ups were sorry for what they had done. They realized that the children were very important too. So they asked them what they wanted from the Celebration, and what they'd like to do to make it better and happier and more wonderful for them, too.

And everyone sat down and tried to remember how The Celebration started. They began to remember the simple picnics. They began to remember everyone being together. They began to remember everyone being happy, everyone being involved, and everyone celebrating God's amazing love together. They remembered the older ones telling stories and the younger ones finding butterflies and caterpillars and laughing in the sun. They remembered everyone singing into the sunset. And then they remembered what The Celebration was really all about.

# Time to Reflect

WHAT IS THE MOST  
IMPORTANT PART OF  
THE STORY FOR YOU?

WHAT DO YOU LIKE BEST  
ABOUT THIS STORY?

WHERE ARE YOU  
IN THE STORY?

IF YOU WERE TO REWRITE  
THIS STORY, WHAT WOULD  
YOU CHANGE?

WHAT DOES THIS STORY TELL YOU ABOUT HOW WHOLE  
COMMUNITIES CAN WORSHIP TOGETHER?

# *What is Intergenerational Worship?*



FAITHMOUNT CHURCH IS JUST about to start its monthly intergenerational worship service. The theme is 'The Light of the World'. As we enter we can see a collection of different lamps standing on two tables at the front of the church. We sing, 'Lord, the light of Your love is shining...' There's a small group of musicians, of all ages, accompanying our singing. The words are displayed on the PowerPoint screen so that everyone can see them clearly.

Just before the scripture reading the lights in the church are turned off and the blinds are closed. There's a just a small light at the lectern. Then, as people from every generation read different Bible verses about light, the lamps on the front table are turned on, one at a time, to create an increasingly bright light.

After the scripture reading everyone is invited to find someone from another generation and tell them about a light that is important in their life. A small child tells an older woman, sitting in a wheelchair, about his teddy-bear night-light, and how it comforts him in the dark. She

tells him that her home has a special light on the outside. Whenever she is hurt, or stuck, or has an emergency, she can press a button on the cord around her neck and the light outside her house will flash to let people know she needs help.

The offering is collected in old, large lanterns. The lights on the tables at the front are turned off again, ready for the sermon.

The interactive sermon focuses on different colored lights and what they mean to us—thanking God for being that kind of light for us, and inviting us to be that kind of light in the world—celebrating lights (like birthday candles and twinkly lights); red lights, that warn people of problems and dangers and tell them to stop; blue lights of emergency services rushing to help; green lights encouraging people to move; street lights and headlights that show us how to find our way safely, etc. The appropriate colored lights are lit up at the front of the church, by children who are shown which switches to press.

The service closes with everyone singing ‘This little light of mine’. As they leave the sanctuary each person is invited to choose a glow stick or a small candle to take away with them. The light will help to remind them of today’s message.

Intergenerational worship is a refreshing approach to church worship. It aims to create worship services where each person’s needs, gifts, senses and learning styles are involved. It may also be called ‘all-age worship’. But ‘intergenerational’ is a more useful term, in spite of its length, because it describes the *intention* of this kind of worship service to enable the different generations to mingle together, communicate with each other, learn from each other, share with each other and respect each other. There are different styles of intergenerational worship, and each service will be very different. But the intention is always the same—everyone in the family of God worshipping and learning together in a respectful, diverse and creative community.

### **INTERGENERATIONAL WORSHIP IS:**

- a worship service that involves, engages and inspires every person in the congregation.

- a worship service that uses verbal, visual and sensorimotor worship experiences so that the learning preferences of each person are valued and met.
- a worship service where each person can learn from the insights, inspiration and wisdom of people from different generations, including those who are much younger or older than they are.
- a worship service where the spiritual gifts and skills of any person in the congregation can be used to bless the others, including the spiritual gifts and skills of small children.
- a worship service where Bible stories may be experienced through as many senses as possible, so that they come alive. The vibrancy of the experience helps strengthen the memory of the story in people's minds, so that the narratives will keep on teaching them throughout their lives.
- a worship service where most aspects of the service can be understood and enjoyed by the children as well as the adults.
- a practical way for congregations to follow Jesus' example of placing special emphasis on the spiritual needs of children.
- a worship service where the focus is on each person having an experience of Jesus Christ.
- a worship service where each person can experience the love of God for them, and the love that other people in the congregation have for them too.
- an opportunity for each person to show love, care and respect for others in their congregation and community, not just their own friends and family members.
- a worship service where everyone can experience being part of the living body of Christ—where each person is gifted, special and valuable, regardless of age ability, gender, class, education and skills, etc.
- a worship service where everyone can grow and work together, as we all encourage each other on the journey of becoming more like Jesus.
- a reflection of the intergenerational worship that God's people have experienced since the beginning of time, and that they will experience, perfectly and forever, in heaven.

## INTERGENERATIONAL WORSHIP IS NOT:

- a service that is called a 'Family Service', where children are present but mostly uninvolved.
- a service where the only time children are involved is during the seven-minute children's story.
- a service where children are only invited to do 'grown up things in grown up ways'—such as praying, reading the scripture, and providing special music in a traditional adult manner.
- a service that is planned 'just for the children'.
- a service that is focused mainly on the needs of people who enjoy verbal activities and unconsciously neglects the needs of people with other learning styles.
- a service focused on the intellectual and worship needs of adults.

## WHY IS INTERGENERATIONAL WORSHIP NECESSARY?

Intergenerational worship is vitally important for healthy church growth.

- Intergenerational worship is **sustainable**. Churches which are continually looking for ways to involve every generation in their worship experience are more durable than those focused on meeting the needs of a specific age group (such as the needs of students, or young families, or older people). Specialist churches often struggle as their members grow and develop into different life stages. A church created for students and young people may find it difficult to meet their needs when they become young couples and young families. Whereas a church that is intentional about intergenerational worship will work towards creating services that are attractive to every age group.
- Intergenerational worship is **evangelistic**. Some researchers have discovered that the fastest growing churches in the United States are those that involve children in their worship services on a regular basis. When we meet the needs of the children in the worship service it enriches their experience of church, helps them to feel valued, and provides opportunities for them to serve others. All of these are important factors that may encourage them to make strong, lifelong commitments to God. Unchurched families with young children may also feel more welcome at services which cater for the needs of every generation.

- Intergenerational worship is **Biblical**. Some people may be concerned that intergenerational worship is new, modern, and just a passing fad. But we can follow the history of intergenerational worship throughout the whole Bible. Patterns of worship that neglect the important spiritual needs of children have developed since Bible times.
- Intergenerational worship is **inclusive**. It values diversity and celebrates the unique giftedness of each person in the congregation as an equal member of the body of Christ, regardless of age, gender, ability, education, etc. It also allows older people to benefit from the refreshing insights, energy and creativity of the younger members of the church, and younger people to benefit from the wisdom, creativity, faith and experience of the older members.

WORSHIPPING TOGETHER:

# *Think about it*

WHY DO WE NEED TO WORSHIP TOGETHER AS A CHURCH COMMUNITY?

WHEN WE HAVE A WORSHIP SERVICE, WHAT ARE THE TOP THREE THINGS WE ARE HOPING TO ACHIEVE?

## WHAT DO PEOPLE WANT TO EXPERIENCE FROM WORSHIPPING TOGETHER?

- To worship God with their whole being
- To pray together about important issues
- To learn more about God and His will for their life
- To feel loved by God
- To feel loved by other human beings
- To receive and help and encouragement for their daily lives
- To use their gifts to enhance the worship experience of the church community
- To use their gifts to help those who are needy
- To be encouraged in their spiritual development
- To share hope in the future coming of Jesus
- To experience the peace and joy of a Sabbath blessing
- To be inspired by other people's perspectives and stories
- To experience some aspect of worship in their personal learning style
- Other ideas...

WHY MIGHT THESE GOALS VARY EACH WEEK FOR EACH PERSON?

HOW DO WE RESPOND THE MANY LAYERS OF NEEDS, AND THE DIFFERENT SPIRITUAL LEVELS OF MATURITY OF A WHOLE CONGREGATION?

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES WE FACE WHEN CHURCH WORSHIP BECOMES A PASSIVE EXPERIENCE?

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES AND BENEFITS WE FACE WHEN WE TRY TO MAKE CHURCH A MORE ACTIVE EXPERIENCE?

WHAT PERCENTAGE OF YOUR CONGREGATION MIGHT APPRECIATE INTERGENERATIONAL WORSHIP?

IN WHAT WAYS IS YOUR CHURCH ALREADY IMPLEMENTING INTERGENERATIONAL IDEAS AND PRACTICES?

WHAT ARE THE HOPES  
AND GOALS THAT YOUR  
CHURCH HAS FOR  
INTERGENERATIONAL  
WORSHIP?

WHAT MIGHT  
INTERGENERATIONAL  
WORSHIP LOOK LIKE IN  
YOUR CONGREGATIONAL  
CONTEXT

WHAT DIFFERENCE MIGHT IMPLEMENTING  
INTERGENERATIONAL WORSHIP AT YOUR CHURCH MAKE  
TO THE FOLLOWING PEOPLE?

\_\_\_\_\_

A lively preschool child

\_\_\_\_\_

An 8-year-old girl who is brought to church by her grandmother

\_\_\_\_\_

A single parent with three children

\_\_\_\_\_

A teenager who thinks church is boring

\_\_\_\_\_

An artist who feels his skills aren't valued in church

\_\_\_\_\_

A young adult who wants to make a difference to the world

\_\_\_\_\_

A retired man who has never had a family

\_\_\_\_\_

# *Ten Reasons for Holding Intergenerational Worship Services in Your Church*

INTERGENERATIONAL WORSHIP SERVICES AIM TO:

**1**

Model and reflect God's desire for us to worship and serve Him as a church family together—God's family on earth.

**2**

Nurture the spiritual development of children by actively involving them in the church services from a young age.

**3**

Provide a worship experience that meets the spiritual and learning needs of a larger proportion of your congregation than traditional services, by incorporating a balance of visual and kinesthetic experiences alongside the customary verbal activities.

**4**

Deepen each person's understanding of the important Bible stories, themes and teaching in the Bible, by enrich their multisensory experience, so that their inspiration and learning is more deeply embedded in their memories and their lives.

5

Provide a worship experience that is as meaningful, valid and relevant to the 21st century context as any of the different and contextually-relevant worship experiences described throughout the Bible.

6

Value our 'made in the image of God' creativity in all its multi-faceted dimensions by celebrating the spiritual gifts, skills and talents of each person in the congregation, including the children, and by valuing effort, involvement and inspiration, above the need for perfect performances.

7

Develop and honor a spirit of generosity, patience and humility, where every member values each other's diversity of age, ability, education, culture, worship preferences, inspiration, spiritual development, and learning styles, etc.

10

8

Provide an excellent and effective opportunity for evangelizing the families and people in your local community by providing interesting, creative and accessible worship experiences.

9

Give families the opportunity to experience fresh ways of worshipping together which may resource and enrich their own family worships.

This is the space for you to include your own reason for holding intergenerational worship services in your church... What motivates you to work towards having intergenerational services in your church?

# *From Eden to Everlasting...*

BEFORE WE EXPLORE intergenerational worship we need to reflect on the history of worship, and notice how and why it has changed over the centuries. In the Bible we find a number of very different models for community worship. We can learn something from each of these models to help us create effective intergenerational worship experiences today.

## **IN THE BEGINNING...**

The first worship services were probably simple and spontaneous. God walked and talked with Adam and Eve in the most beautiful botanical and zoological gardens ever designed. There was no sermon, no Bible reading, no offering and maybe only the background music of birdsong in the trees. The three of them wandered together through the garden, exploring God's amazing creations. Adam and Eve listened attentively as God answered their curious questions about how things worked and why the creatures and plants were all so different. They came to know God face-to-face, experienced His powerful and intimate love for them, and learned more about His character every day. If Adam and Eve had an Edenic family, they would also have joined in with this interactive, multisensory, experience of love and wonder... a perfect model of the intergenerational worship God created us to experience. Genesis 1-2.



Physical context:

- Surrounded by a vibrant, colorful and ever-changing natural environment
- Face-to-face with God

Worship style:

- Small group
- Worshippers active and moving around
- Spontaneous and unstructured praise and worship
- An intimate and loving conversation with God Himself
- Continual hands-on discovering and learning

**What aspects of Edenic worship can inspire our intergenerational worship today?**

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### **FROM EDEN TO EGYPT**

After the fall God instituted the need for animal sacrifices as a symbol that one day Jesus would become a sacrifice for our sins. Abel, Noah, Abraham and other patriarchs built altars, together with their families, and burned sacrifices. Genesis 4:4; Genesis 8:20; Genesis 12:7,8, etc.



Physical context:

- Worship probably took place outside around a stone altar
- Altars were built wherever they lived and as soon as they moved to a new place
- Worship also took place to thank God for His protection and for providing for their needs, and celebrating special events

Worship style:

- Intergenerational – led by the leader of the family for his entire household
- Active – building altars and gathering firewood, etc.
- Multisensory – sounds, sights, and smells of sacrificing the animal—a vivid and dramatic metaphor of the plan of salvation
- Prayers
- Songs of praise
- Storytelling – recounting the stories of God’s continued relationship with His people

**What can we learn from building family altars that can inspire our intergenerational worship today?**

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## **WORSHIP IN THE WILDERNESS**

While the children of Israel were wandering in the wilderness they had much to unlearn about the pagan religions of Egypt and much to learn about the love, mercy and goodness of God. They worshipped together as families, clans and communities.

Physical Context

- In the tabernacle, a beautiful hand-crafted tent with embroidered drapes, gilded poles and beautifully crafted accessories—full of symbolism. Exodus 25-27.
- In the desert, with the pillar of God’s glory to shade them in the day and light their way at night. Exodus 13:21



### Worship style

- Intergenerational – everyone worshipped together
- Multisensory – the tabernacle had objects to touch, see, smell, taste and hear
- Celebratory – regular festivals and celebrations that involved the children and adults participating, planning and telling stories together
- Interactive and participatory – bringing animals for slaughter, etc.

**What can we learn from worship in the wilderness that can inspire our intergenerational worship today?**

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### **FAMILY WORSHIP**

While they were living in the wilderness, God gave the children of Israel His important rules for happy and healthy living and asked the parents to teach them to their children. Deut. 6:1-7.

### Physical context

- Wherever the family found themselves as they went about their everyday lives

## Worship style

- Familiar – using everyday events and moments to teach children about God, His love, His law, and their responsibilities
- Naturally multisensory and interactive as it is closely connected with everyday activities and events
- About loving God with all their heart, mind, physical strength and spiritual strength – every part of their being
- Naturally intergenerational as extended families lived together or in close proximity

**What can we learn from Deuteronomy 6 family worship that can inspire our intergenerational worship today?**

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## OTHER OLD TESTAMENT WORSHIP EXPERIENCES

### Psalms

- Worship is intergenerational and is passed from generation to generation (Psalm 22:22-31)
- Learning about God through nature, everyday events, and the ongoing struggles, mistakes and joys of our spiritual journeys (Psalm 23, etc.)
- Praising God in all kinds of ways, and with all kinds of instruments (Psalm 150, etc.)
- Talking to God about the deepest, darkest and most private aspects of our lives. (Psalm 51, etc.)

### Great leaders and prophets

- Learning about God through visual experiences—visions, dreams, visual illustrations (Daniel, etc.)
- Learning about God through kinesthetic, active, and multisensory experiences – e.g. going down to the Potter's house (Jeremiah 18:1-6)

**What can we learn from other forms of Old Testament worship that can inspire our intergenerational worship today?**

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### **JESUS' MINISTRY**

While Jesus was in earth He spoke in synagogues and preached in the temple complex. But most of the time He gathered groups of people together and talked to them wherever they were. (Matthew 5:1,2; Matthew 9:9-11; John 18:20)



#### **Physical Context**

- Outside – in the market place, by the lake, on a hillside, as He walked along the streets and through the fields (Matthew 5:1-2)
- Inside – in synagogues, at parties, in the temple, in people's homes (Matthew 26:55; Matthew 9:9-13; Mark 2:1-5)
- Often surrounded by nature and everyday activity



#### **Worship style**

- Clear and simple preaching for everyone to understand at their own level (Matthew 5-7)
- Storytelling – Lots of simple and memorable stories (Matthew 25)
- Rich use of visual metaphors and illustrations (Matthew 6:25-34)

- Making use of the everyday events, creatures, and activities that were familiar to His listeners (Luke 15)
- Inviting people to touch, taste, see, smell and hear different things (food, foot-washing, perfume, grapes, sheep, etc.)
- Inviting people to be together in peaceful, happy and loving ways (Matthew 5-7)
- Food was often provided (Matthew 14:13-21)



**What can we learn from Jesus' style of worship that can inspire our intergenerational worship today?**

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### **EARLY CHRISTIAN HOME-CHURCH**

Paul encouraged diversity in worship. He invited Christians to 'let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. *And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him* (emphasis supplied). (Colossians 3:15-17)

#### **Physical Context**

- Churches often met in people's homes (Romans 16:5)
- Everyone met together including children – intergenerational (Acts 16:32-34)
- Food was often served (Acts 2:43-47)

### Worship Style

- Spontaneous, but structured, to create a sense of order needed for effective worship (1 Corinthians 14:26-32)
- Everyone invited to contribute whatever they felt inspired to bring (1 Corinthians 14:26)
- Whole families baptized together (Acts 16:32-34)

**What can we learn from the early Christians' home-church worship that can inspire our intergenerational worship today?**

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## HEAVENLY WORSHIP

### Physical Context

- The glory of God lights up the whole place (Revelation 21:22-24)
- Glorious and amazing visuals completely beyond the imagination of human eyes and ears (1 Corinthians 2:9)
- Gardens, streets of gold, Sea of Glass, a beautiful city (Revelation 21:9-21)
- Everything focused on the greatness and glory of God (Revelation 4:1-11; 21:22-24; 22:1-5)

### Worship Style

- Intergenerational and intercultural—everyone together (Revelation 7:9-10)
- Lots of noise everyone shouting together to make a sound like thunder! (Revelation 19:5-8)
- Celebratory (Revelation 19:22)
- Feast provided (Luke 13:29; Revelation 19:5-9)

**What can we learn from heavenly worship that can inspire our intergenerational worship today?**

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## **CONSISTENT THEMES IN VARIED WORSHIP**

As we look at these different styles of worship throughout the Bible we can see that there is no one specific style of worship that is valued more highly than any other. It isn't the style of worship or the venue that makes worship worshipful. As God's people found themselves in different contexts they worshipped in different ways. Each style of worship was very different, yet all are equally valid.

At the heart of each kind of worship are some core values:

- There are many different expressions of worship throughout the Bible.
- In Bible times there were regular, community celebrations in which everyone could participate.
- Everyone comes together to worship God, regardless of age, ability, gender, class, etc.—everyone is equal in God's sight.
- Worship experiences are often multisensory, practical, visual and interactive.
- The focus is on our relationship with God and with each other.

**What insights have you had into creating effective intergenerational worship from exploring some of the worship styles in the Bible?**

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**How does understanding some of the ways intergenerational worship was experienced in the Bible help you to feel more confident about experimenting with intergenerational worship today?**

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# *Understanding Jesus' Theology of Childhood*

BEFORE WE EXPLORE intergenerational worship at a practical level, it's important to understand some of the ideas at the heart of Jesus' theology of childhood. This study will help us to be grounded in His perspectives and values. It will also give us confidence to speak out for children's needs within intergenerational worship because their voices are rarely heard on church worship committees.

If you're exploring intergenerational worship in a larger group, you could break into smaller groups; read the verses; talk together about the questions; and then make a creative presentation of your ideas to the whole group.



Otherwise read the passages prayerfully and reflect on them carefully. Make notes of any ideas and thoughts that come to your mind as you build up a rich picture of the kind of worship Jesus wants children to experience.

## **JESUS BLESSES THE CHILDREN**

'People were bringing little children to Jesus for Him to place His hands on them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this, He was indignant. He said to them, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." And He took the children in His arms, placed His hands on them and blessed them. Mark 10:13-16, NIV.

- Who welcomes the children in your church as Jesus did?
- Who responds to the children like His disciples did?
- List the ways in which children are welcomed, loved and blessed during the main worship service of your local church.
- We need to be humble enough to learn from our children how to respond to God and how to worship Him. What holds you back from worshipping God as freely as the children in your church?
- We need to welcome children with open and loving arms and have relationships with children that bless them. What blessings do the children in your church experience each week, and how could they experience a wider variety of God's blessings in your church's ministry?
- We need to understand that Jesus is upset and angry when we do things that turn children away from His love, and misrepresent Him. If He came to your church this week, what would He discover about the value your church places on its children? What would He see the children experiencing that would make Him feel happy and what might make Him feel sad or angry?
- What other thoughts do you have about these verses?

## **THE CHILDREN PLAYING GAMES**

"To what can I compare this generation? They are like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling out to others: 'We played the pipe for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn.'" Matthew 11:16, 17, NIV.

At one level these verses can help us to reflect on what happens to children when they're invited to mimic adult activities that they don't really understand. Maybe they're not just being contrary and awk-

ward—maybe they just don't understand the adult worlds of weddings, funerals, and even church worship? It's difficult for children to make sense of many of our adult worship activities, so they are unable to enter into these activities with understanding and enthusiasm. We've all been children. So it's much easier for an adult to enter the world of a child, than it is for a child to enter the world of an adult... Maybe we need to enter their world more often?

Many church activities are not part of a child's everyday experience. Imitation play (copying what adults do) has a purpose, but children learn more deeply through a 'wondering' kind of play where they explore and experience ideas for themselves. They enjoy play that has lots of possibilities rather than one specific, copied, outcome that they don't really understand.

- How can we let go of our need (or the needs of other church members) to organize church in ways that make sense to adults but not to the children?

### **CHILDREN PRAISING IN THE TEMPLE**

The blind and the lame came to him at the temple, and He healed them. But when the chief priests and the teachers of the law saw the wonderful things He did and the children shouting in the temple courts, "Hosanna to the Son of David," they were indignant. "Do you hear what these children are saying?" they asked Him.

"Yes," replied Jesus, "have you never read, "'From the lips of children and infants, You, Lord, have called forth your praise?'" And He left them and went out of the city to Bethany, where He spent the night. Matthew 21:14-17, NIV.

- Jesus is happy when children praise Him in spontaneous ways. He is even happy when they shout their praises in church! How might some of the people in your church respond to children shouting praises, and what might Jesus say about the children's behavior?
- We need to let children praise God in their unique and natural way. We need to learn from our children how to praise God, and not expect them to praise God in adult ways. What have you learned

about praising God from your children? How can we feel freer to join the children in their praise and worship experiences?

- We need to be aware that the Holy Spirit works in children's lives and helps them to recognize God in their experience. How can you watch for ways in which the Holy Spirit is working in the lives of the children around you, and how can you help them to listen to His voice?
- What other thoughts do you have about these verses?

### **WHO IS THE GREATEST?**

At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who, then, is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"

He called a little child to Him, and placed the child among them. And He said: "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever welcomes one such child in My name welcomes Me.

"If anyone causes one of these little ones—those who believe in Me—to stumble, it would be better for them to have a large millstone hung around their neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea...

"See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of My Father in heaven.

"What do you think? If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off? And if he finds it, truly I tell you, he is happier about that one sheep than about the ninety-nine that did not wander off. In the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should perish. Matthew 18:1-6,10-14, NIV.

- We need to become as humble as children in the presence of God. Describe the humility of a child and consider what you can learn from their humble attitude.
- We need to be willing to change to accommodate the needs of the children in our church and community. What changes do you

personally need to make to accommodate the needs of the children in your church? What changes does your church community need to make?

- Jesus said that children are great in God's kingdom and He also describes children as being central to the church. How 'great' and 'central' are the children in your church?
- Jesus has harsh words to say about people who turn little children away from God. In what ways might children be turned away from God in your church, and what can you do to prevent this from happening?
- In the story of the lost sheep the shepherd went to great lengths to rescue the lost sheep, risking his own life. What risks might you have to take in your church in order to evangelize and save the children?
- What other thoughts do you have about these verses?

### **FEED MY LAMBS**

When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?"

"Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Feed my lambs."

Again Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you love me?"

He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep."

The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?"

Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Feed my sheep." John 21:15-17, NIV.

Jesus takes Peter aside, just before His ascension, to discuss his fu-

ture ministry and to reinstate him as a respected disciple, in spite of his denials. Before Jesus describes Peter's future work He asks Peter whether he loves Him. When Peter affirms his affection, Jesus asks him to feed His lambs. Then He asks Peter to feed His sheep.

WHAT RELATIONSHIP  
DO YOU THINK THERE  
IS BETWEEN PETER'S  
LOVE FOR JESUS  
AND HIS 'CALLING'  
TO CARE FOR THE  
LAMBS?

WHAT OTHER THOUGHTS  
DO YOU HAVE ABOUT THESE  
VERSES?

JESUS CALLS PETER TO CARE FOR THE LAMBS, AND THEN  
THE SHEEP. WHAT SENSE MIGHT WE MAKE OF THIS WHEN  
WE'RE PLANNING INTERGENERATIONAL WORSHIP?

# *Jesus-Intergenerational Worship Leader*

GROUNDING IN HIS THEOLOGY of childhood, Jesus puts His beliefs and values into practice to give us some excellent principles for effective intergenerational worship. Here are a few of His best intergenerational worship tips.

## **FOCUS ON GOD AND HIS KINGDOM**

One of the main focuses of Jesus' teaching was to help us understand the relational Kingdom of God and heaven, and how this Kingdom can inspire us to love God and love each other. Matthew 5:18-20; Matthew 10:7; Matthew 13:11, 24, 31; Matthew 19:14, etc. Effective intergenerational worship keeps the Kingdom of God at the heart of its teaching and experiences.

- How can you keep the Kingship and Kingdom of God at the very heart of your intergenerational worship?

## **WELCOME CHILDREN WITH OPEN ARMS, AND BLESS THEM**

Jesus welcomed children with open arms, even when He was tired and needed a rest. He didn't say 'Shush!' and 'Sit still!' Instead He took them in His arms, sat them on His lap, smiled happily and blessed them. Mark 10:13-16.

- If Jesus came into your church this week how might He bless the children in your congregation and local community?

## **CREATE A RELAXED ENVIRONMENT**

Jesus held His services in the open air and on mountainsides, where children could crawl in the dirt, pick flowers, toddle around, and chatter away without being disruptive or making a troublesome mess.

Matthew 5:1-2

- What can you do to help families and people of all ages feel more welcome in your church?
- Are there any attitudes towards protecting the furnishings and equipment in the church that may need to be addressed, or for which other practical solutions need to be found, so that the children in your church know they are more important than chairs and carpets?

### **TELL SIMPLE STORIES**

Jesus told short stories that everyone could understand and enjoy in their own way. His stories were simple and easy to remember. They were often only one or two sentences long! Luke 15:3-7.

- What can we learn from the simplicity and brevity of many of Jesus' parables?

### **USE PLENTY OF VISUAL ILLUSTRATIONS**

Jesus used visual illustrations and metaphors to help people understand more complex spiritual lessons, such as shepherds and salt. Matthew 5:13.

- Which of Jesus' visual illustrations and metaphors has inspired you?
- How could you include more visual illustrations in your church services?

### **PROVIDE FOR THE LEARNING STYLES OF EVERY PERSON IN THE CONGREGATION**

Jesus met the needs of every learning style when He taught. He spoke words that inspired the verbal learners; used visual illustrations and metaphors to inspire the visual learners; and used physical and sensory experiences, like eating bread, washing His disciples' feet, and letting Thomas touch His hands after the resurrection, etc.

- How can Jesus' way of meeting the needs of people's different learning styles inspire us to create a balance of learning experiences in our intergenerational worship?

## **USE EVERYDAY EXPERIENCES**

Jesus' teaching was often in the context of everyday life experiences. He made the maximum use of every learning opportunity available, even fruitless fig trees, and storms on the lake. Using illustrations from everyday life ensures that the listeners will be regularly reminded of the stories and the important messages they helped to convey. Mark 11:12-14; Mark 4:35-41.

- What everyday illustrations have inspired you in the past, and what effect did that inspiration have on your life?

## **MEET PEOPLE'S NEEDS**

Jesus understood and met the needs of the whole person—physical, sensory, emotional, relational, educational and spiritual. He made sure they were healed, fed, safe, loved, inspired, blessed, accepted and forgiven. Luke 19:1-10; Matthew 14:13-21; John 2:1-11; Mark 5:21-43.

- What are the needs you would like your intergenerational worship to meet?
- How will you make sure they are met?

## **EMBRACE APPROPRIATE CHILD-LIKENESS**

Jesus valued child-like faith that was accepting, innocent, simple joyful and humble. He taught His followers the importance of becoming like little children, and not to be so proud, self-sufficient, arrogant and sophisticated that they missed out on valuable spiritual experiences. Matthew 18:1-10.

- How would you describe the difference between childishness and childlikeness?
- Why does Jesus place such a strong emphasis on His followers becoming like little children?
- What childlike attitudes do you think God wants us to develop?

## **BE SPONTANEOUS TURN THE UNEXPECTED INTO THE INSPIRED**

Jesus wasn't concerned about 'unexpected' interruptions, and He wasn't

disturbed by things that didn't seem to go according to man's plan. He didn't see these events as disorderly or irreverent. He calmly took them all in His stride and used the opportunities to show God's love and grace to those who were most vulnerable. Mark 2:1-12; Luke 8:40-48.

- List several important attitudes and approaches to the spontaneous, unexpected and apparently disruptive events that can happen in intergenerational worship.

### **REACH OUT TO 'CHURCHOPHOBES'**

Jesus enjoyed teaching and worshipping with those who would never step inside a church. He met them at parties, in the streets, in their homes and even in the branches of tree! Matthew 9:9-13.

- What can we learn from Jesus' creative use of places and social events to enrich the outreach of our intergenerational worship?

### **THINK AND ACT OUTSIDE THE BOX**

Jesus was frustrated by all the unnecessary, man-made rules and restrictions that the Jewish faith leaders had developed to manage and control people's behavior and worship. He came to bring a breath of fresh air and to challenge many of the religious traditions. When church leaders sang the familiar chorus of 'We've always done it like this!' He made it clear that He was ushering in a new kingdom, with different rules. Jesus' kingdom often turned things upside down—the weak were strong, the sad were comforted, the despised were accepted and loved, the least became first, and the faith of a child was to be an example for the grown ups. Matthew 5:3-12; Matthew 18:3.

- How do you need to think outside the box in your worship context?
- What's your response to the reaction of 'We've always done it like this!'?
- What else did Jesus teach us about intergenerational worship by the way He ministered and taught, and how can we incorporate these other ideas into our worship?

# Ellen White and Intergenerational Worship



EVEN THOUGH INTERGENERATIONAL worship was not a term that Ellen White would have used, she shared several practical and insightful ideas that are supportive of this style of worship.

She urged churches to ensure that all of their children experienced the wonder and joy of Jesus' love whenever possible. 'At every suitable opportunity let the story of Jesus' love be repeated to the children.'<sup>1</sup> 'In order to break down the barriers of prejudice and impenitence, the love of Christ must have a part in every discourse.'<sup>2</sup>

She encouraged churches to take special consideration of the needs of children during the church worship service. 'In every sermon let a little corner be left for their benefit.'<sup>3</sup>

Ellen also set an example for interesting, multisensory, creative, varied and intergenerational worship in her own family. 'There is no reason why (worship) should not be the most interesting and enjoyable ex-

<sup>1</sup> *Gospel Workers*, p. 208.

<sup>2</sup> *Evangelism*, p. 189.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

ercise of the home life, and God is dishonored when it is made dry and irksome. Let the seasons of family worship be short and spirited. Do not let your children or any member of your family dread them because of their tediousness or lack of interest. When a long chapter is read and explained and a long prayer offered, this precious service becomes wearisome, and it is a relief when it is over.

'It should be the special object of the heads of the family to make the hour of worship intensely interesting. By a little thought and careful preparation for this season, when we come into the presence of God, family worship can be made pleasant and will be fraught with results that eternity alone will reveal...

'Select a portion of Scripture that is interesting and easily understood; a few verses will be sufficient to furnish a lesson which may be studied and practiced through the day... At least a few verses of spirited song may be sung, and the prayer offered should be short and pointed. The one who leads in prayer should not pray about everything, but should express the needs in simple words and praise God with thanksgiving.<sup>4</sup> 'Let the services be brief and full of life, adapted to the occasion, and varied from time to time. Let all join in the Bible reading and learn and often repeat God's law. It will add to the interest of the children if they are sometimes permitted to select the reading.'<sup>5</sup>

Ellen White clearly advises worship leaders to consider the needs of the children present in ways that are compatible with the objectives of intergenerational worship. She was most concerned that worship experiences should be appealing to children so that Jesus' love, and His salvation, would always be attractive to them. She offers pastors, preachers and worship leaders the following useful guidelines:

- Ensure that the love of Jesus is central to the worship experience.
- Ensure that the worship is interesting, pleasant and enjoyable for the children.
- Vary the styles and activities of the worship experience to prevent predictability and tedium.

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<sup>4</sup> *The Signs of the Times*, August 7, 1884.

<sup>5</sup> *Education*, p. 186.

- Make sure that no one will ever dread being bored in a worship service.
- Use simple words that everyone can understand.
- Sing short and lively songs.
- Make the worship practical and relevant for everyone.
- Keep the worship, Bible readings, sermons and prayers short and interesting, so that they are not tedious, tiring and boring.

These inspired guidelines may help to allay the concerns that some people are likely to have about intergenerational worship, and they can also inspire you to move forward with confidence and wisdom.

# *How Our Learning Style Influences Our Worship Experience*

WE HAVE THREE (now grown up) children and God created each one with a different learning style. Our first child enjoyed looking at books, and listening to stories, well before her first birthday. She grew up loving books, writing, debating, discussing, listening, speaking and singing, and today she works in publishing... She was our first child and when we had family worship together she would happily listen, read and pray. We did other creative worship activities, which she also enjoyed, but she always had a preference for verbal learning.

Then her brother was born. If we showed him a book, or tried to read to him, he would shut the book closed, often squashing our hands inside the hard covers! He was only interested in books if they had lots of pictures. He would look at the sky and watch airplanes and birds that I couldn't even see. He wanted to look at books with diagrams and he memorized the flag designs of dozens of countries. As a teenager he regularly designed the PowerPoint for our local church services, and spent hours creating the perfect images to illustrate the songs and sermons. He's definitely a visual learner.

Our third child entered our lives installed with a lifetime supply of Energizer batteries! He touched, tasted, moved, and experienced his world in a state of perpetual motion. A kinesthetic learner, he loves sports, being with people, doing things, and having new and interesting experiences.

## **DISCOVERING YOUR LEARNING STYLE**

If you're not sure which is your learning style, there's one simple (completely non-scientific!) test. Imagine that you've just brought home a new vacuum cleaner or cell phone...

Would you rather:

- a) Read the instruction book from beginning to end?
- b) Use the diagrams to figure out how it works?
- c) Or invite someone to give you a practical demonstration?

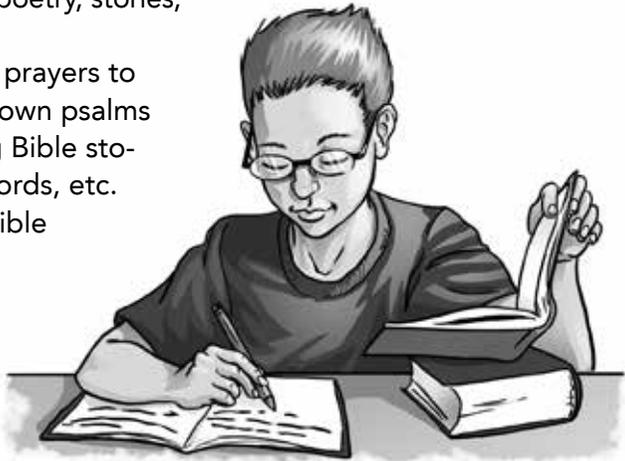
If you chose:

- a) you're probably a verbal learner
- b) you're probably a visual learner
- c) you're probably a kinesthetic learner

Read through the following descriptions and see which of them sounds most like you.

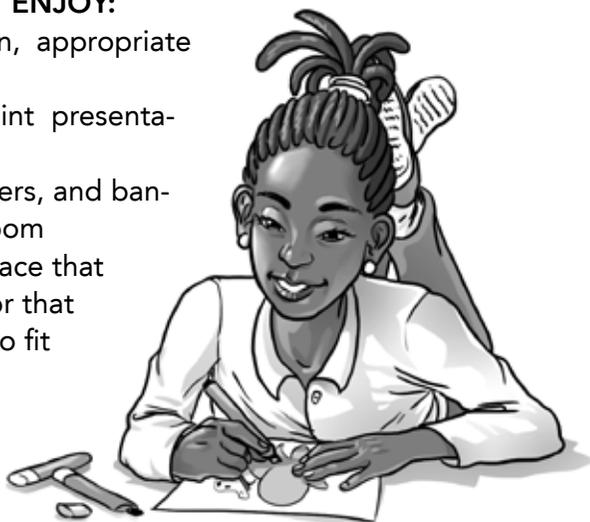
### **VERBAL LEARNERS MAY ENJOY:**

- Reading Bible verses and other relevant literature, poetry, stories, etc.
- Writing Thank You prayers to God, writing their own psalms of praise, rewriting Bible stories in their own words, etc.
- Using traditional Bible study methods
- Listening to sermons and devotional talks
- Discussing their ideas
- Debating topics
- Having quizzes, especially factual questions, true or false, multiple choice, etc.
- Researching Bible information and history
- Creating Bible story time-lines
- Speaking from scripts/drama
- Using written or spoken prayers



## **VISUAL LEARNERS MAY ENJOY:**

- Watching well-chosen, appropriate film-clips
- Looking at PowerPoint presentations
- Having pictures, posters, and banners in the worship room
- Being in a worship space that is visually attractive, or that has been decorated to fit the theme
- Looking for things hidden in the room, or in a picture, or on a PowerPoint slide
- Drawing a 'cartoon strip' of the Bible story
- Watching a sketch or a short drama
- Doing picture quizzes and Rebus puzzles (where pictures and symbols replace some of the words in a sentence, etc.)
- Making posters or cards, etc. as a response to a Bible story
- Helping to create a praise banner
- Looking at objects that illustrate a message
- Exploring metaphors which help them to build up a picture in their imagination
- Looking at Bible land maps to see where people went and where things happened
- Helping to make a large, interactive bulletin board display that explores the theme of the service
- Designing tithe and offering envelopes to coordinate with a service theme



## **KINESTHETIC LEARNERS MAY ENJOY:**

- Helping to act out the Bible story
- Moving their bodies, or moving to a different section of the room, to show you their response to a multiple-choice question
- Doing action songs and learning sign-language
- Putting actions to Bible verses or stories

- Expressing their ideas and thoughts through movement or by shaping play-dough/clay etc.
- Creating things from craft materials or junk
- Helping to assemble care packs for homeless or disadvantaged people
- Experiencing things through their senses
- Creating the props for a worship experience or story
- Setting up the worship room
- Waving ribbon streamers during praise and worship songs



## **A BRIEF HISTORY OF WORSHIP STYLES**

For many centuries church worship has privileged those who are verbally-orientated. This may well have been because theologians and clergymen were more likely to be people who were interested in words and books. So they studied and learned and taught and probably shaped church worship in ways that made sense to them as people neurologically wired with verbal preferences. To make life simpler for busy church workers, beautifully expressive prayer books were written, containing almost the entire script for a service. All they needed to add was a very short sermon.

Some old churches were designed with visually-orientated people in mind. They installed stained glass, sculptures, tapestries and pictures to help them remember and understand the Bible stories. Other church cultures chose to eliminate visual distractions from their churches, making them very plain and simple, partly to prevent people being distracted from the important words that were being spoken.

Holy Communion provided the multi-sensory experience for the kinesthetic Christians, often providing the opportunities for movement, tasting, touching and blessing.

Over the centuries different churches and denominations developed their own unique patterns and styles of worship, and traditions were formed. There is no Biblical precedence for the order or style of service that most churches use today. Early Christian church worship, according to Paul, was simple and often spontaneous. It included preaching, teaching, hymn-singing, prayers, a collection of tithes and offerings, and eating together. Yet some congregations can hold as tightly to their worship traditions as they do to the Ten Commandments.

### **REFLECTING ON WORSHIP TODAY**

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, most churches, from all kinds of cultures and denominations, tend to focus largely on verbal expressions of worship. Yet only about 30% of the population prefers verbal learning and experiences. Verbally-focused worship is so traditional, and so widely taken for granted, that we barely pause to think about the negative effects of creating worship services that focus on the learning preferences of the minority of the congregation.

### **THE DANGERS OF FOCUSING ON VERBAL WORSHIP STYLES:**

- Verbally-orientated worship services can easily deter those who are visually or kinesthetically orientated.
- Significant numbers of people find speaking aloud in groups, reading, and writing very difficult.
- Most children don't develop strong enough verbal skills to be truly verbally-orientated until they are at least ten years old.
- Today, with an increased understanding of how we learn, most children are taught using visual and kinesthetic methods—and find it easier to learn when they are actively involved in seeing, exploring, creating and doing.
- People with other learning preferences can feel inferior to those who have verbal preferences when they are involved in highly verbal worship services.
- People with other learning preferences may feel 'guilty' for not enjoying verbally-focused worship, and somehow inadequate because they would rather see and *do* something to experience God than *listen* to something.

- Because many church leaders, administrators, pastors, and theology professors are likely to prefer verbal experiences, they may not fully understand the needs of those who prefer to learn visually and kinesthetically, or appreciate the importance of re-evaluating a style of worship that meets their own personal worship and learning needs, but not those of the majority of their congregation.
- Many people who could come to our churches may not feel comfortable in worship services that contain mostly verbal activities. They may have experienced our worship services, and then slipped away or found another church that did meet their needs.

### **MY JOURNEY OF DISCOVERY**

I'm a freelance writer, so, when I participated in a workshop on learning preferences, I assumed I'd be in the group that preferred verbal learning experiences... But I was wrong! I'm really a visual learner with a strong leaning towards kinesthetic. Writing is my skill, but not my learning style. So I sit in churches longing to create beautiful banners with inspiring verses on them to hang on the plain walls. I go to church hoping the preacher has a PowerPoint presentation with beautiful pictures. I love it when the preacher uses illustrations that conjure up pictures in my mind. I have to sit with an open notebook, doodling and drawing the ideas in the sermon, in order to stay focused on the service. And I'm a grandmother with a Master's level education, not a child just out of kindergarten.

I used to feel that my longing for visual, creative and sensory worship experiences was somehow wrong. That's the kind of message I picked up subtly, or overtly, over the years. Then one day I went to a festival of worship. I stepped onto a marquee packed with different creative worship experiences. I spent hours there, returning day after day to learn what I could about multisensory worship. I felt at perfectly at home there. Everything had been created for someone with my learning preferences. I no longer felt weird, or not spiritual enough, or strangely inadequate. I wasn't the only one to enjoy these different, and intensely worshipful, experiences—there were other people out there like me! I gained more spiritual insights in one hour in that marquee than I had in a whole year of sermons.

I began writing notebooks of my ideas. Then I gathered the supplies to run creative prayer and worship experiences for all kinds of spiritual events, and set them out on attractive tables with clear instructions. Most of the people who stepped into a creative prayer room enjoyed the activities.

But I've had some interesting and varied reactions over the past ten years of running creative prayer and worship seminars, and leading out in all-age services:

- I don't see any need for this kind of stuff.
- Just focus on the Word of God—anything sensory is always suspect.
- This is just playing—we should be studying the Bible instead.
- These things are nice entertainment for the children, but fortunately they grow up.
- We go to church to sit and listen. Any other activity is irreverent.

It's sobering to see how powerful these messages can be, and it's disturbing to feel the negative effect these sincere comments can have on those who naturally prefer visual and kinesthetic experiences. Roughly 70% of people are visual and kinesthetic learners, and probably so are about 70% of our members. But their needs aren't being fully met, their ideas and preferences are often dismissed, and, like me, they are often made to feel childish, inferior or not spiritual and serious enough. They, like many of the children in our churches, may learn that there's very little in the church service that meets their needs, and leave feeling empty, uninspired and unfulfilled.

## **VALUING DIFFERENCE – ENRICHING WORSHIP**

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century church worship is probably more diverse than it's ever been. Some churches still depend on their traditional, verbal style of worship that has stood the test of time. Others are revisiting the worship experiences and feasts that God designed for the Israelites. They are reading the literature about the spiritual development of children. They are discovering how our brains learn in different ways, and they are trying to create worship services that respectfully meet the different needs of all the people in their congregation.

## **BENEFITS OF INCORPORATING DIFFERENT LEARNING STYLES IN A WORSHIP SERVICE:**

- Including activities for different learning styles echoes God's designs for the sanctuary services and the special feast days found in Leviticus.
- Meeting the needs of the different learning styles also reflects the way Jesus taught in His ministry.
- People with different learning styles feel valued, cared for, respected and blessed.
- Children and adults are more likely to enjoy a worship service that involves their learning styles.
- Unchurched people may feel more comfortable with varied styles of worship that suit all ages and learning styles, and that don't expect them to have high levels of verbal skills.
- Families may be more likely to attend a church service when they know that each person will enjoy at least on aspect of the service.



WHAT IS YOUR PREFERRED LEARNING STYLE?

HOW HAS THIS SHAPED YOUR OWN WORSHIP PREFERENCES?

HOW MIGHT YOUR OWN WORSHIP PREFERENCES HAVE SHAPED THE WAY THAT YOU HAVE RESPONDED TO WORSHIP ACTIVITIES THAT MEET OTHER PEOPLE'S LEARNING PREFERENCES?

THINK ABOUT THE LAST WORSHIP SERVICE YOU ATTENDED. DRAW A CIRCULAR PIE-CHART, AND DIVIDE IT INTO THREE SLICES, ROUGHLY EXPRESSING HOW MUCH OF THE SERVICE WAS VERBAL, VISUAL AND KINESTHETIC. WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED BY LOOKING AT YOUR SERVICE IN THIS WAY?

WHAT DOES YOUR CHURCH DO THAT MEETS THE NEEDS OF VISUAL LEARNERS?

WHAT DOES YOUR CHURCH DO THAT MEETS THE NEEDS OF KINESTHETIC LEARNERS?

WHAT ELSE COULD YOUR CHURCH DO TO MEET THEIR NEEDS?

READ THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER (MATTHEW 13:1-23). MAKE A LIST OF VISUAL AND KINESTHETIC WORSHIP EXPERIENCES BASED ON THIS STORY THAT YOU COULD INCORPORATE INTO AN INTERGENERATIONAL WORSHIP SERVICE.

# *Different Models of Intergenerational Worship*

THERE ARE ALL KINDS of intergenerational worship happening around the world, and new ones are being developed and nurtured all the time. Here are the descriptions of several different models of intergenerational church. These descriptions also include some of the practical considerations, benefits and challenges of the various models.

Each model can also give you fresh ideas and perspectives for your own intergenerational worships—so it's worth reading all of them and picking out some of the ideas that appeal to you, and that might work well in your own church.

Not every church is ready for intergenerational worship. The micro-culture of each church is different, and every congregation is on a different place along the road towards involving all the generations. So these models can also help you to plan a road map from where your church is right now, to where you would like it to be in the future.

Program outlines and suggestions have been included for each model, using the theme of the Creation Story, to help you understand the way in which each style of intergenerational worship might approach the topic differently.

## **CHILDREN PARTICIPATING IN AN ADULT-ORIENTATED WORSHIP SERVICE**

At the very simplest level, just involving children in your usual worship service, will make a difference. Whenever a child in the



congregation sees another child doing something in the service, they will usually stop what they're doing and watch what's happening. Aim to involve at least one child every week in your traditional services, as this gives the other children the message that this service is for them too, that they are valued, and that children have a role to play in their church's worship experience.

Children can:

- Introduce a hymn, play an instrument or be involved in special music
- Read the Bible passage for the day
- Help take up the offering
- Distribute bulletins or handouts
- Submit prayer requests
- Participate in practical sermon illustrations



Practical considerations:

- It's important to explain to the child what you are expecting him to her to do. Ask them to tell you what they think you said, to check they really did understand.
- Always do a live rehearsal in the church, such as how to walk on and off the platform, because this will help them to feel more confident.
- Make sure they have something stable to stand on if they are too small to see over the pulpit.
- Check that any microphones are adjusted for their height and voice.
- Don't assume children will know how to do something just because they've been in church every week. They may not have paid any attention to the way people walk on and off the platform, or how the deacons collect the offering, because it hasn't been relevant to them.
- Give children a practical demonstration of what you want them to do, such as which path to take to collect the offering, because many children understand visual instructions better than verbal instructions.

- Provide a mentor who is right there to support and reassure them if they have any problems or in case they become unsure or distressed.
- Always thank them for their contribution to your service. If possible, send them a little 'thank you' card afterwards.

#### Benefits:

- Children are involved.
- Children feel and know that they are in important part of the worship service.
- Children develop confidence in participating in the church's worship experience.
- Children's contributions are valued and appreciated, even if they sometimes make a mistake.



#### Challenges:

- Children are still 'visitors' to the adult worship experience.
- Children are only participating one at a time, or maybe a few at a time—you may not be involving all the children every week.
- Services where children have minimal involvement may not provide the kind of visual and sensory stimulation, and physical movement, that many children need to keep them interested and comfortable.
- Children who are involved in adult-orientated services are probably not engaging spiritually in the worship experience. They are usually copying adult worship behavior. But a child can introduce a hymn, or even read a passage of scripture, and have no idea what

it is really about and how it applies to their worship experience or their personal relationship with God.

Ideas for involving children in an adult-orientated service on creation:  
Hymns

- Children can choose their favorite hymn about creation, or about God as a creator, and introduce it to the congregation.
- Older children and teens could be involved in creating a Power-Point presentation where the words of the hymn are accompanied by photos of nature.
- Children can use percussion instruments to accompany a rousing hymn of praise to God.

Prayer time

- Children could draw pictures of God's creations that they want to thank Him for. They could come to the front and hold up their pictures for everyone to see. Some of them could also be asked why they want to thank God so much for the creation they have drawn.
- Children could be invited, in advance, to bring in pictures, models and real things that God has created. These could be arranged in a display at the front of the church to inspire thanks and praise to God.



Scripture

- Children could draw pictures to illustrate each verse used in the scripture reading. They can come to the front and hold up their pictures during the appropriate verse. Or their pictures can be scanned and used to create a PowerPoint to accompany the scripture reading.
- Children could memorize one verse each and present the scripture reading together.

- Children may be able to mime actions to illustrate the scripture readings.

### Offering

- Children could draw one of God's creations, for which they feel especially thankful, on a plain envelope. They could put their offering in this envelope and place it in the collection.
- Children could be asked to find offering containers that illustrate something God has created. The deacons, or children, can then use these containers for collecting the offering during the service. They might choose an object made from carved wood, a basket made from twigs or reeds, a dried gourd, a coconut shell, something covered in flowers, etc.
- During the sermon the children could be sent to search for hidden objects that illustrate the different days of creation. They could bring them to the front of the church where they can be displayed in groups for each day of the creation week.
- A beautifully illustrated PowerPoint could accompany the sermon, so that the children have something interesting to look at. They could also be given a handout listing things to look for on the different PowerPoint slides, such as the color of a flower, an almost-hidden mouse, the number of birds in a picture, etc.

## **MENTORING CHILDREN PARTICIPATING IN THE WORSHIP SERVICE**

This level is very much like the first level, but children have mentors who will work with them for a few weeks before the service. Mentors are trusted adults who love children, understand how to nurture their spiritual awareness and help them to participate in the worship service at a deeper level than mere performance.

### Practical considerations:

- A mentor supporting a child who has been asked to do a scripture reading may first meet with the preacher or worship team so they understand the focus of the service.
- The mentor will then meet with the child and they will pray and read the verses together.
- The mentor will explore the verses with the child to make sure he or she really understands what they mean.

- The mentor checks that the child understands all the words and that the child understands the context of the passage.
- Then a discussion can be opened up using the types of questions that Jerome Berryman<sup>6</sup> has developed in 'Godly Play' to nurture children's spiritual development:
  1. What do you like best about these verses?
  2. What do you think is the most important part of the message?
  3. Which phrase or verse says something special to you?
  4. What else might we use to help the other children in the congregation understand this message better? (props, costumes, PowerPoint pictures, mime, background music, etc.)
- The mentor is careful to nurture the child's ideas and not take over the process. If a child suggests something that seems inappropriate, the mentor might say, 'That's very interesting... I wonder what else we could do?'
- The mentor then works with the child to find the most effective way to communicate the message in the scripture reading. The mentor practices with the child, supports and helps them with their creative ideas, shows them how to step on and off the platform and use the microphone, and prays with them before the service, etc.

A music mentor would also work with any child involved in special music, helping them practice the difficult sections, and supporting them during their playing or singing, etc. The music mentor can also help the child understand the hymn, song or piece of music better, using 'Godly Play' type questions and conversations, so that the child can sing or play with heart-felt meaning.

#### Benefits:

- The child's understanding of their contribution to the worship experience is increased and valued.
- A spiritually nurturing relationship is encouraged between the mentor and the child.
- The congregation benefits from being open to learning from the children in their church, and by being encouraged to see things in fresh ways, through their eyes.
- The children in the church will benefit because they will learn from each other.

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<sup>6</sup> Jerome Berryman, 'Godly Play', Augsburg Fortress, 1999.

- The child feels that their contribution is important and appreciated.
- This is a simple way to ensure children can make a positive contribution to any worship service—at any stage along the path towards fully-integrated intergenerational worship.

Challenges:

- Mentors need to understand their part in the process—as supporters and enablers—not directors.
- There is always some risk when a child is empowered to be creative in a worship service—but the mentor takes the full and final responsibility for whatever happens.
- Some people in the congregation may need to understand that worship is not about a perfect performance.

## **INTERGENERATIONAL FAMILY SERVICES**

Family services usually aim to be ‘family-friendly’. But they may vary widely in their approach. In some churches this just means their service takes place at a family-friendly time, or they provide a crèche or separate program for the children. Others may just have a children’s story and a worksheet on the theme of the service, or they might use some of the ideas listed in the chapter ‘Sixty simple ways to involve children in your worship service right away.’ Some may even include a lively and contemporary children’s song as part of their worship experience. Other services are truly intergenerational family services, and they aim to involve children more actively throughout the program.

The needs of the families, and the worship culture, vary from church to church. If you want to start an intergenerational service, ask your families what they would like to see included, or excluded, from the worship service. One church that surveyed their families discovered that the service needed to finish by 12:15 at the latest. The children were used to eating their school lunches at 12:00 during the week, so they became increasingly restless when their tummies started rumbling! The parents also suggested including a song for the children during praise time; letting the children use percussion instruments during the part of the praise time; keeping prayers simple and short; not using archaic language in church; and providing thoughtful worksheets for the children on a similar theme to the sermon.

One church told their pastor, 'we don't mind what you do for the children. We've lost so many generations of young people and we don't want to lose another. Our faith is settled and we can feed ourselves spiritually if we need something extra. So you go right ahead! Be creative, focus on the children, and we'll back whatever you choose to do!'

Yet another church decided to change the timing of their Sabbath services to make them more family-friendly. Parents of young children in one urban church found the early morning start too stressful. So they decided to experiment by continuing to hold the church service at 11:15am, sharing a potluck lunch together, and then having Sabbath School classes in the afternoon.

Intergenerational services often have an order of service similar to a traditional church service, but they aim to involve more people in more creative ways throughout the service. The 'sermon' is likely to be much shorter to enable time for participants to be more involved in the prayers and the Bible story, the scripture readings, brief discussions and other creative activities. The sermon is also more likely to include an interactive, visual or creative experience of some kind.

Benefits of intergenerational family services:

- Children's needs and interests are considered by the worship planners at every point in the service, as well as the needs and interests of the adults in the congregation.
- Both the children and the adults only need to wait a short time before there will be something in the service that they can understand and enjoy.
- Ensuring that there is something for everyone helps to nurture a spirit of generosity within the congregation—'I can enjoy what's happening right now, even if it's not my style, because there'll be something that suits my needs very soon.'
- The service usually includes some movement (like an action song, or children being actively involved in the children's story or a sermon illustration) and something visual (like pictures on a PowerPoint, or watching something happening) so that it will appeal to a wider range of learning modes than the highly verbal traditional service.
- The intellectual needs of some members can be met by prepar-

ing an inspirational handout with a summary of interesting points, useful scriptures on the subject, and thought-provoking questions for them to consider. If something in the service doesn't appeal to them, they can explore the ideas on their handout. Thoughtful, deeper questions can also be displayed on a flip chart or PowerPoint for adults to ponder.

- Holding intergenerational family services at least once a month means that those who prefer a more traditional service will have their needs met, and the families and children can look forward to their special services.
- Teenagers and young people can be involved by giving them the topic and inviting them to prepare an activity on the theme—such as a creative prayer, an interesting way to take up the offering, a PowerPoint to accompany the scripture reading, or a short sketch, etc.

#### Challenges:

- An effective family service does take extra time and thought to plan and prepare. It's useful to work together in a team so that the workload can be shared amongst people, and their different skills and gifts can be used in the most effective way.
- Family services are often noisier than other services, so make sure you have an adequate PA system, and use the loop-system so that those with hearing aids can enjoy a better quality of sound.

#### Real churches...

One small, rural church, with about 50 members, has several families who make up about half the congregation. They wanted to enrich their own children's experience of church, and support their busy pastor who has two other churches. So, with everyone's agreement they chose to make the first service of each month a family service.

The four main families in the church met to develop their vision for the family service:

- The service should have as broad an appeal as possible, but with a strong focus on the children because the other services in the month would have a greater focus on the adults in the congregation.

- The music should focus on songs that appeal to children and there should be some fresh and contemporary children's praise songs whenever possible.
- Each family will be responsible for 3 services a year, so that the workload is shared and they each have 3-4 months to prepare.
- Each service should use as many of the senses as possible.
- Activities need to focus on visual and sensorimotor experiences, rather than listening and speaking.
- Children need to be actively involved in each part of the service.
- Four thought-provoking questions for adults will be printed in the bulletin whenever there is a family service.

What guidelines might your church draw up to ensure a successful family service?

## **POSSIBLE INTERGENERATIONAL FAMILY SERVICE OUTLINE FOR THE CREATION STORY**

Preparation:

- Provide a handout or PowerPoint with a few questions for the adults to think about if they wish:
  1. What does it mean to you personally that God is your Creator?
  2. Apart from people, light, water and food etc., what is your favorite thing that God has created?
  3. God created you so that He could love you as the best Father ever! How has He shown His love for you this week, and how have you shown your love for Him?
  4. What would you tell someone who wanted to know why you believe God created the world?
- Find and prepare seven large gift bags. If possible each bag should have a picture of something made on each of the days of creation, such as water, flowers, lights, animals, fish, sun, a church, etc. Fill



each bag with items that illustrate the things God made on that day (see later). Try to appeal to as many senses as possible—and have something to taste, smell, touch, hear and watch as it moves (wind up animal etc.) Also label each bag with the relevant number and attach a portion of scripture to each bag—in numbered order. Hide the bags around the church for the children to find later.

- Also prepare the prayer activity as described below.

### SERVICE OUTLINE:

- **Welcome and introduction** – Possibly start with the room darkened and then turn on the light and show a picture of the world on the screen.
- **Praise songs** – Include at least one hymn and one lively children’s song.
- **Scripture reading** – Send the children around the church to find hidden gift bags. Each bag has a large numbered tag with the relevant scripture written on it. Line the children up in the correct number order as seen from the congregation and invite each child to read the scripture written on their bag’s tag. Offer help for the younger ones who may find reading difficult.
- **Prayer** – Find four gift bags of different solid colors. Make a large label for each bag that says Praise, Thank You, Sorry, or Please. Using the same color paper as the appropriate bag (to help small children match the papers to the bags), print one of the four prayer headings onto separate sheets of paper. So, if ‘Thank You’ is on a pink bag, print ‘Thank You’ on the top of enough pink sheets of paper for everyone to have one (or print them in such a way that you can cut the paper in half with a heading on each half). Give each person four sheets of paper—one of each color/heading—and ask them to write a sentence, or draw an object, inspired by the heading on each of their papers. Send the children to gather the papers and post them in the correct bags, matching the colors. Pick up each bag of prayers in turn and pull out a few papers to read as your prayer for the service. You could display the prayers afterwards on a large wall, if you wish, but avoid displaying the ‘Sorry’ ones as they may include private confessions.
- **Offering** – use gold-colored gift bags for collecting the offering, to continue the gift theme, and to illustrate that our offerings are

gifts back to God to thank Him for sharing His creation and resources with us.

- **Sermon/story** – Use the bags that were found during the Scripture reading to help you tell the story of creation. You will have pre-filled them with some of the following things:
  1. Day 1 – candle, or torch etc.
  2. Day 2 – bottle of water/bubbles (to illustrate the firmament like a bubble around our world)
  3. Day 3 – a growing plant, fruit and vegetables, etc., including some that can be tasted
  4. Day 4 – large battery-operated star, etc.
  5. Day 5 – toy bird or fish
  6. Day 6 – toy animals and simple people dolls
  7. Day 7 – church, large red heart, etc.
  8. On each day of creation God gave the world a very different, very special, and very wonderful gift. Tell the story of creation, inviting the children to come and help you unwrap and enjoy the different gifts—tasting, smelling, touching, and listening, etc. Or prepare 7 adults, teenagers and children to speak for 2-3 minutes about what they like about each of the days of creation, or what each day means to them.
- **Closing praise song or two** – There is a song about creation composed to the tune and style of 'The Twelve days of Christmas.' You will find the words in the 'Creation Worship Resources' section of this book.
- **Blessing/benediction**
- **Take home item** – You can also give each child a tiny gift bag with seven small objects representing each day of creation. They can take them away and try to put them in the correct order when they get home.

## FLOW CHURCH

Flow-style services are a useful model for churches looking for an effective way to experience intergenerational worship. They are semi-structured, with some corporate worship experiences for everyone, and a range of optional activities, or worship stations, that are created around the theme for the day. These alternate throughout the service so that each act of corporate worship is followed by a choice of wor-

ship activities. In one hour there would be three to four whole congregation worship times and three times when each person can choose the worship experience that best suits their needs, age or interests.

Everyone is together for the start of the service, which includes a few praise songs, a prayer, the collection of tithes and offerings, and an introduction to the theme. There may also be a short orientation to the worship activities being offered. After the introductory session everyone is invited to move around the room and choose a worship activity that appeals to them. After 7-10 minutes a worship song will play to call everyone back to worship together. The second corporate worship experience might include a more reflective song and a scripture reading. The third might include a ten-minute 'sermon', and the final corporate worship experience will include a closing thought, hymn/song and a benediction.

The choice of activities between the corporate worship times might include:

- An art or craft activity on the theme of the service
- A discussion group that focuses on a different question during each break-out session
- A creative prayer activity or quiet zone
- An experiment that illustrates the theme of the service
- An interactive children's story
- An appropriate film clip that illustrates the theme
- A guided writing activity on the theme of the service
- A short Bible study session
- An interesting Bible quiz
- A practical ministry/service opportunity, like packing care kits for homeless people
- A prayer group
- A practical/multisensory way to experience the Bible verse or the theme of the service.

Practical considerations:

- The flow worship team needs to meet a month in advance of each service to pray together, explore the theme, share ideas and work out the range of activities that will be offered. Meeting up again a week before the service gives everyone an opportunity to explain

what they will be doing, check that everyone's on target, and ask for help and materials, etc.

- Flow worship needs plenty of space. It is best if all the activities can take place in one room, to keep people together, and to make it easier to call people back into the times when everyone is worshipping together.
- Flow worship can be noisy as people are interacting, discussing ideas, telling stories, and making things, etc. So each activity zone needs to have plenty of space around it so that people can hear and concentrate.
- Make sure that there are activities that will appeal to each age group, especially children and teens.
- Some activities, like reflective prayer, may need a quieter space, screened area or distant corner, so that people are not easily distracted by the other activities.
- Call people back to worship using a theme song. This provides a gentle and worshipful reminder for them to return to the main group, and people can join in with the song as they return to their places.



#### Benefits:

- Flow church is a flexible model of worship.
- Each person is involved in the corporate worship experiences, as well as in a range of worship activities that they have chosen them-

selves. Everyone is able to choose the worship that they most appreciate, or that best reflects their current needs.

- Different people can take responsibility for preparing each of the optional worship experiences, so the workload can easily be shared.
- People who might be daunted by being leading out in a traditional service might happily volunteer to supervise an art activity, or help to prepare an area where personal care-kits for homeless people can be assembled.
- If there is a last minute emergency, one of the activities can easily be discarded, as there will still be several other choices.

#### Challenges:

- Flow worship does take time to prepare and set up. It's important to meet as a team and work closely together to organize an inspiring choice of worship experiences.
- Flow worship can feel strange at first because people are not used to having choices about their worship experiences, moving around the room, and being active during a service.
- Parents may need to accompany young children to some of their activities. But try to provide at least one activity where children can be left while parents choose a worship experience to meet their needs. Interactive story sessions, or even a crèche with some simple toys on the theme of the service, can be helpful.
- Some people may feel uncomfortable moving around and doing different activities during a worship service. They may prefer to sit and listen to three short devotional thoughts, or mini-sermons. If necessary, invite three speakers to give three different five-minute talks on the theme for the day and so that sitting and listening to them can be one of the available options.

### **FLOW WORSHIP STATION IDEAS – CREATION THEME**

#### Creative prayer:

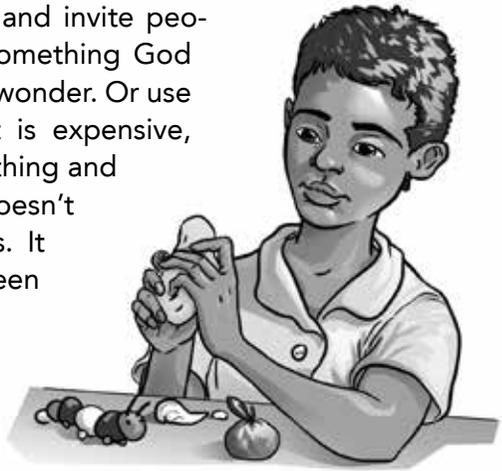
- Provide plenty of lovely craft materials, blank cards, scissors, glue, etc., for people to make a thank you card for God. Invite them to thank Him for seven things—one thing for each day of creation.

### Interactive story:

- The story of creation can be told with actions for the children to do, or objects/pictures of the days of creation for them to find and place in order. Leaders can also ask the following questions, based on Jerome Berryman's 'Godly Play' wondering questions:
- Which day do you like the best?
- Which day do you think is the most important?
- Which day is most about you?
- Which day can we leave out and still have all the days we need?

### Craft:

- Provide lots of playdough and invite people to make a model of something God created that fills them with wonder. Or use Crayola 'Model Magic'—it is expensive, but it has a wonderful, soothing and smooth feel to it, and it doesn't crumble and make a mess. It doesn't keep once it's been opened, so only open what you need. Let people take home their creations as a reminder of the service.



### Meditation space:

- Provide a range of natural, created objects, such as flowers, shells, leaves, twigs, fruits, etc. Invite people to choose one, study it really carefully for five minutes, and be filled with wonder about the God who designed and made it.

### Mini talks:

- What creation means to me, perhaps by an artist, gardener, or craftsperson, etc.
- A short talk about the wonder of creation, perhaps by a scientist or doctor.
- Our relationship with the God who creates, and recreates, by the pastor.

#### Film clip:

- The C.S. Lewis 'Narnia' book 'The Magician's Nephew' has a beautiful description of the story of creation. There may be a suitable short clip in the film (released in 2013). Or invite a good reader to read the passage. Find some suitable background music to enhance the atmosphere if possible.
- Find a short video clip of a sculptor at work, or a garden makeover. Discuss the difference between our creativity and God's creativity.

#### A guided writing activity:

- Provide quality paper and pens and invite people to write a short psalm with 7-10 verses. Each verse needs to praise God for one of the things He made on each of the days of creation. The extra verses can introduce the theme of praise and creation, and conclude the psalm in an appropriate way.

#### Bible study/discussion:

- Choose two or three interesting discussion questions on the subject of creation.
- Have a brief Bible study on why God chose to create the world, etc.

#### Bible quiz:

- Ask 2-3 Bible questions per day of creation – Eg.
  1. Day 1 – Questions about times where darkness and/or light are mentioned in the Bible
  2. Day 2 – Questions about times where sky, clouds, or water are mentioned
  3. Day 3 – Questions about times where trees, flowers, fruits and grass are mentioned
- For younger children—make a simple game where they turn over pictures or pick up created objects and match them to the correct day of creation.

#### A practical ministry/service activity:

- Plant small flowerpots with pansies to be taken to people who are house-bound. Decorate the plant sticks with encouraging cards and messages.
- Make attractive candleholders, etc. to celebrate God's gift of light. Give them as gifts to inspire people going through a dark time.

## STORY-CHURCH

Story church is a concept devised by Christian storyteller and pastor Bob Hartman<sup>7</sup>. Rather than trying to follow a traditional service outline, he takes a Bible story and creates a service that is shaped by the details of the story. So, if possible, the main prayer takes place when there's a prayer in the story. The songs are chosen to work well with the different parts of the story. If the people in the story move about and do something, then movement and activity are planned into the service at those points.

The result is a rich worship experience that works as closely as possible with the Bible story, and includes plenty of extra creativity along the way to help everyone become immersed in the story. Another advantage of this approach is that people experience stories within their own personal contexts, meanings and needs. A young boy and his grandmother will both understand the same story, but it can have a very different meaning and personal application for each of them.

Stories keep on inspiring us in different ways, long after 'The End'. This is why Jesus used parables. The Holy Spirit can bring a story to mind, and give it different meanings, at any time in our lives. The more actively we have experienced a Bible story, the better we will remember it, and the more likely it will make a difference to our lives.

## HOW DOES STORY CHURCH WORK?

- Begin by prayerfully choosing a story. You might start at Genesis and work through the Bible, selecting different stories that suit your church's needs or the time of the year. Or you might decide to explore different parables, or find another way to choose your stories.
- Read the story carefully, with your team, and discuss some of the different themes and ideas you have.
- Look at the storyline and see when prayers, songs and activities might naturally occur, to help you develop an outline for the program.
- Try to find songs that fit well into the story and program. You may need to write some simple words of your own to a familiar tune.

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<sup>7</sup> All-Age Services, by Bob Hartman, David C. Cook, 2009.

- Choose a creative or simple prayer activity that coordinates with the story.
- Take up the offering in a creative way that may be suggested by the story.
- Think of ways to help the congregation experience the story that will involve as many people as possible, and encourage them to be involved and interact with each other, as families, and across the generations.
- Think 'outside the box' and explore how each of the five senses can be involved in the story. Use verbal, visual, creative and active ways of experiencing the story.

### **STORY CHURCH SAMPLE PROGRAM AND IDEAS:**

- Praise and worship time – focusing on the God of creation.
- Experiencing the story – give each person a cheap paper gift bag, or brown lunch sack. Tell them not to look inside it until you ask them to. In the bag is a tea-light candle, a very small plastic cup, a leaf shape cut from green posterboard or a flower cut from colored posterboard (you can buy bags of precut flower and leaf shapes made from paper, adhesive felt or foam in most craft stores), a few sticky gold stars, a colored feather, two pipe-cleaners, a red heart cut from felt (or a purchased red heart) and a pencil.
- Tell the story of creation. At the end of each day invite people to take the relevant object from their bag and use it to celebrate the gifts God made on that day. The objects and activities listed below are just examples, so feel free to use the creativity of your team to think of other interesting ideas.
  1. Day 1 – place all the tea-light candles on a large heat-proof trays and light them carefully.
  2. Day 2 – collect and drink a small drink of water from their tiny cup.
  3. Day 3 – stick a leaf on a large outline of a tree and a flower on the grass underneath it.
  4. Day 4 – stick the gold stars on a black sheet of posterboard to make a night sky scene.
  5. Day 5 – stick the feathers inside the outline of a bird shape.
  6. Day 6 – shape the two pipe cleaners (chenille sticks) into a person or an animal and see if someone else can guess what you've made!

7. Day 7 – stick the red hearts inside the outlines of letters spelling 'GOD' so that His name is 'love'.
- Prayer – Invite each person to write their name down the side of a sheet of paper, (or on their paper bag, using the pencil or marker in their bag) and to write one thing they want to thank God for beginning with each letter in their name. Children can draw pictures instead of writing if they wish, or older children and adults can help the younger ones. If they have a very long name, they can just use the first 5-6 letters, their shortest name, or a nickname.
  - Offering – Find seven containers that illustrate the days of creation in some way, such as a birdcage for day 5, a water jug for day 2, and a black and white container, or lantern, for day 1. Number them to make sure there's no confusion. Invite people to place their offering in a container representing the day in which God made something that they especially enjoy. So they would put their offering into the container for Day 6 if they wanted to say a special thank you to God for their friends and family.
  - Closing – after a prayer of blessing, celebrate together with an Edenic meal of fruits and nuts.



## **MESSY CHURCH**

Messy Church is an intergenerational church experience designed for people who wouldn't usually go to a traditional church. Although it was originally developed as a community outreach ministry, the approach, ideas and activities may also work well for informal intergenerational worship services. The goal of Messy Church is to share Jesus with parents and children, because at least one adult family member needs to stay with the child. Messy Church is based on the values of sharing Jesus with others, creativity, celebratory worship, contempo-

rary relevance, and hospitality. It also aims to strengthen the families who attend, as well as the wider 'families' of community relationships and people across the globe.

The Messy Church concept was developed in England in 2004, and it has now spread across the UK and around the world. One Adventist church near London has been running Messy Church once a month for almost 5 years. They now have more than 170 people attending each Messy Church experience, which is as many as their space can hold, and many of these families are unchurched.

Messy Church includes crafts, songs, games, a prayer, and a short time of celebration together. All the activities help the children and adults to explore a Biblical theme, to learn about Jesus, and to nurture their relationship with Him. There's usually a meal or snack after each Messy Church, and the children and their parents or grandparents are also involved in preparing the food. Even the meals are creatively linked to the Bible story in some way!

Messy Church can take place at any time in the week, not necessarily on Sabbath, but most Adventist churches running Messy Church activities schedule them during Sabbath morning or afternoon.

Messy Church was inspired and created by the charity 'Bible Reading Fellowship', which continues to resource and support Messy Church programs. For more information see [www.messychurch.org.uk](http://www.messychurch.org.uk).

#### Practicalities:

- Messy Church needs a dedicated team of trained people, who understand children, enjoy creativity, don't mind a little mess, have a growing relationship with God and a clear vision to share Jesus with the children and families in their community. Messy Church also needs to have someone responsible for the overall management of the Messy Church Ministry, and others who can help with the publicity, food, music and songs, storytelling, games, and craft activities. Other volunteers and willing teenagers are always useful, but parents and grandparents will also be there to support and help their own children.

- Messy Church needs plenty of space for semi-messy activities. The room, walls, floors and furniture all needs to have wipe-clean surfaces. But it's also useful to have the worship celebration in the church, where there are less distractions, while the tables are being set for food and snacks.



- The celebration time needs to involve as many children as possible, and maybe some of their artwork, too. It only needs to be short—3-4 songs—two lively and one quieter, perhaps, a five minute illustration or story, with action and visuals, and a creative prayer activity. Some groups ask for permission to take photographs of the children and their work, and then show them in a PowerPoint slideshow during the worship time or meal.

#### Benefits:

- Messy Church is an intergenerational worship experience that also functions as an effective and successful outreach ministry.
- Children and parents/grandparents, etc. come together to make, eat, listen and celebrate, so there is plenty of intergenerational communication and relationship building taking place.
- The name 'Messy Church' is welcoming for people who feel their lives and relationships are messy; those who would feel uncomfortable in a traditional 'Tidy Church' setting; and those who are concerned that their children would be noisy, messy, or disruptive in a traditional church service. Jesus came to minister to people whose lives were messy—the woman at the well, the woman caught in adultery, lepers, Zacchaeus, etc.
- Organizers of Messy Churches have reported that they often attract dads, who are very happy to come with their children and get

messy, well away from home where mom is having a break! As it's often hard for churches to reach men, this is an excellent way of breaking down barriers. So make sure you have several men on the Messy Church team to help any dads, uncles and grandfathers feel welcome.



- Messy Church is widely recognized in the UK as a 'brand' of church that families can trust. Christian families are often willing to travel to find a Messy Church so that they can enjoy the experience with their children, and to help their children enjoy getting to know Jesus.
- The workload for each session can easily be divided up between specific teams, so it is easier to organize.
- Messy Church is a flexible concept—you can adjust the program and style to suit your local needs.
- It has a dedicated website with plenty of support materials, and program outlines are continually being generated. So you don't have to reinvent wheels or struggle to find creative ideas.

#### Challenges:

- Some people may feel uncomfortable with the word 'Messy'. Our concept of church as being orderly, clean, neat and predictable is challenged when we associate it with the adjective 'Messy'! Some churches call it 'Creative Church' instead. But life and children are naturally messy, and being free to make a safe mess helps children to feel loved and accepted, just as they are, without the pressure to perform, to produce a perfect end result, and to stay neat and tidy.

- Some people may wonder about cooking and making things on Sabbath. However, children often do crafts and prepare simple snacks as part of their Sabbath School experience. The crafts and foods involved in Messy Church are all designed to help the children explore the Bible story and to enjoy it with all of their senses, so that they will learn and remember the stories more easily. It may be useful to think of these activities as different ways to worship and learn, rather than as 'work', or as 'things we don't do on Sabbath'.

#### Useful resources

- [www.messychurch.org.uk](http://www.messychurch.org.uk)

## CREATION MESSY CHURCH – SAMPLE IDEAS

### Craft activities

- Children can be provided with all kinds of craft materials and be invited to make a new creation out of old junk, etc.
- Or they can design a brand new animal, fish, bird or flower.
- They can draw something they enjoy that God made during each day of creations.
- They can make a mobile or garland illustrating the days of creation.

### Food

- Children can make edible pictures of a garden using slices of fresh fruit.
- They can choose their own fruit smoothie ingredients and create a new kind of drink.
- They can have a paper plate divided into seven sections, with something to eat representing the things God made on each day.
- They can make and decorate gingerbread people and animal cookies.

### Games and other activities

- Allocate spaces around the room for the numbers 1-7. Call out something God made and let the children run to the number of the day on which they think it was made.
- Have a relay race where children take it in turns to run to a table and collect something from each day of creation in the correct order.

## Celebration

- Prayer – as part of the craft time invite the children to make thank you cards for God for the things He has created. Or use an alphabet thank you prayer—call out any letter of the alphabet and have the children thank God for created things beginning with that letter.
- Songs – choose songs that praise God for what He has made. Use some action songs where the children can act out being different animals, trees, fish, etc.
- Illustrated talk – Try making a world using a ‘recipe’ that follows the days of creation. You will find a description of this in the ‘Creation Worship Resources’ section of this book. Make it in a big plastic box with semi-transparent sides, half filled with water. Add a floating candle for day 1, etc. Of course—it won’t work, it will be a horrible mess. We couldn’t make a world no matter how hard we tried! All we do is make a big mess. Only God can make something as beautiful as our world.

## OTHER INTERGENERATIONAL WORSHIP CONTEXTS

House church, family worships and family camps may also provide creative and informal contexts for intergenerational worship experiences. The benefits of these settings are that you can do almost anything you like because you don’t have some of the constraints of trying to do a service to meet the needs of lots of people inside a building. The challenges may be that you don’t have as many technical resources as a church, etc.

Here are some ways in which a house church or family camp might explore the story of creation:

- 7 baskets or boxes could be labeled with the different days of creation and the children and adults could search for different objects natural and man-made that illustrate what was made on each day of creation week.
- Simple activities could be used to help people experience the days of creation. Light could be experienced as having a blind-fold walk, or exploring something in the darkness, and then having the blind-fold removed; blowing bubbles to illustrate the firmament—a big watery bubble that protects our world; or pond dipping; identifying all the trees, grass and flowers in a small area; using the sun

and a magnifying glass to start a safe fire, or making a sun-dial to track the sun's movement across the sky; bird-watching; bug searches; casting animal foot-prints, etc.; making models of each other out of clay; and then having a lovely picnic and praise time to represent Sabbath, etc.

- Inviting different people to research and present a short talk or experience based on each day of creation, or to bring 7 special things that represent each day of creation for them. These can then be displayed and discussed.
- Different families can be given different days of creation and 30 minutes to make something that represents their day, in any way they like, After 30 minutes all the families can go on a grand tour to visit each other's creations and experiences.
- How else could small family groups celebrate the wonder of creation in intergenerational ways?

# *Preparing the Ground*<sup>8</sup>

LAILA HAD EXPERIENCED one of our intergenerational worship services at a family camp where we were the worship leaders. Her family loved being involved in the Bible stories, doing creative prayers together, making crafts, being active, and thinking about interesting questions. They were so excited about intergenerational worship that they invited us to repeat one of the services in her church. We talked with her pastor and explained what we were planning to do and why. He was very supportive of us, because he had small children too, but he was going to be on vacation the week we were taking the service.

We'd never been to Laila's church before, so we had no idea that it had fixed pews and very little space at the front. It didn't have a very good sound system, and the majority of the members were older people, with just a handful of families. Most of the children didn't speak English at home and some had been taught not to laugh, speak or move in church... The organist insisted that all the songs had to be from the hymnbook and in the key of C... And then we discovered their projector had a broken bulb and no one had bothered to buy a spare...

As soon as we walked into the church we knew we were facing enormous challenges. The layout was fixed and there was no space to move around at the front of the church. So we quickly adapted our program to try and fit the space. Even before we started the service I felt doomed! At this point we should probably switched plans and let Bernie preach a regular sermon in a traditional service. But we didn't want to let Laila down, and she'd been so excited about having an intergenerational worship service in her church. As far as she was concerned the congregation was more than ready for the experience.

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<sup>8</sup> In order to protect the identity of people and local churches, Laila's story has been modified and names changed. A series of true experiences has been linked together to create this composite and confidential story.

The situation didn't get any better. The organist struggled to play the basic hymns. The deacons were frustrated that the children were using special envelopes for the offering that they'd have to cut open later. Most of the children weren't allowed to come forward and participate. Several people walked out as soon as I started to tell a contemporary adaptation of the parable of the talents. I longed for the service to end so we could leave! And I'm sure my own struggle didn't add anything to the worship experience of the congregation... As we packed up our things I overheard some mothers talking about how terrible it was to try and involve the children because they only made the service irreverent and ungodly 'like a three ring circus'!

Back in the car, on the long drive home, we soberly reflected on the experience. We realized there was an important principle underlying successful intergenerational worship—preparing the ground. When a church leader invited us to take our intergenerational service to every congregation in the district, we declined his invitation. We'd learned our lesson. We explained that doing an intergenerational service 'out of the blue' would be counterproductive to the progress of intergenerational worship.

## **BASIC REQUIREMENTS**

Before experiencing an intergenerational service, congregations must understand and accept some important, foundational principles:

- Children have developmental learning needs that are often not met within a traditional church service.
- Many adults also have natural learning styles that are not compatible with services that have a strong emphasis on verbal worship.
- The spiritual, physical, educational and emotional needs of children are at least as important as the needs of adults
- Intergenerational worship is Biblical. There are many examples of multisensory, interactive and intergenerational worship experiences in the Bible.
- The way children experience church worship services influences their decision to make a life-long commitment to Jesus.

We're collecting water from the well in a broken bucket when we invest thousands of dollars in evangelizing the adults in our community,

whilst simultaneously holding worship services that are actively turning our own children away from God. Many of our services are actively giving children the message that they don't matter to us or to God, and their needs and gifts and ideas are irrelevant to us. And we are also naively deluded if we think that making our children sit through years of worship experiences that make little sense to them will make them want to join our church, even if we survived the experience ourselves!

## **PREPARING CONGREGATIONS FOR INTERGENERATIONAL WORSHIP**

Our congregations are filled with people who have different learning styles and cultural backgrounds. So we need a number of different approaches to help them understand the need for intergenerational worship.

## **STORIES, ILLUSTRATIONS AND PARABLES**

Stories and parables encourage active thinking and help people to reflect for themselves and draw their own conclusions. This is helpful as they are more likely to

- Tell the parable in the first chapter of this book, or create your own parable to invite your church to reflect on how they worship together.
- Try the 'Foreign Church' illustration:
  1. Ask for a volunteer adult and sit them on a sturdy dining table facing a blank wall. This simulates what it's like for a child to sit on a pew. Their feet and back are unsupported and they are uncomfortable. They will naturally fidget and move to try and feel more comfortable. They cannot see what's going on—only the back of the pew or chair in front of them.
  2. Then let them listen to a sermon in a foreign language that they won't understand—it's easy to download one from the Internet in Chinese, or another language to suit your group. This foreign sermon simulates the experience of a child hearing a sermon, prayers, songs and scripture readings that make no sense to them at all.
  3. After a few minutes ask them – Imagine you have a special

friend who is Chinese (or whatever language you used) and they invite you to come to their church. You go along with them, but you can't understand very much because everyone speaks Chinese, except for a five-minute story in your language in the middle of the service. Not only that, but the chairs are very uncomfortable and they don't fit your body at all.

4. Next week your friend invites you again. What will you say? On a scale of 1-10, where 10 is very likely—how likely are you to return?
5. Now imagine you are taken to that church every week for the first ten years of your life, whether you like it or not, and then someone asks if you'd like to join their church. What will you say?
6. What might you have learned about God, church and yourself attending an uncomfortable and mostly incomprehensible church for ten years?
7. How is this illustration similar or different to the experience of the children in most churches?

## **SERMONS**

- Sermons will reach most of the people in your congregation. You can use illustrations, stories and material from this book to help you create a useful sermon or a sermon series about the importance of intergenerational worship.
- Try to use a range of teaching/preaching methods so that your message touches the visual, verbal and kinesthetic members of your congregation.
- Gently involve people of all ages in the service around the sermon, so that you practice what you preach.

## **OTHER IDEAS**

### **TEN PROMISES TO OUR CHILDREN**

- Use the posters and group studies called Ten Promises to Our Children, which you can download from the Internet at [www.childmin/eng/programs.php?index=24](http://www.childmin/eng/programs.php?index=24).

- You can display the posters around your church and use the group studies with leaders and lay people.
- Whilst not strictly focused on intergenerational worship, these are designed to help your church explore what it means to be more child-friendly.
- These ideas can help to form some of the foundations for developing intergenerational worship services.

## PAPER PLATE CONGREGATION

- Give a cheap paper plate to each person in your group.
- Provide marker pens and invite everyone to draw a face representing a different person in the congregation.
- People with birthdays from January to March draw faces of people under the age of 15; people with birthdays from April to June draw faces of people from 15-30 years of age; people with birthdays from July to September draw faces of people from 30-50; and people with birthdays from October to December draw the faces of people over 50.
- On the back of the plates write what you think this person would say if you asked them to describe their ideal worship service.
- Lay the plates, writing side up, in age groups, and reflect on what you have written. What would it take to make your worship service one that is truly intergenerational?
- Focus your attention on the voices of children under fifteen, as their needs have largely been unmet in church. The older generation can think and fend for themselves, and even find their own spiritual food, but children depend on us to be their voice and to provide effectively for their important needs.



## CHILDREN'S VOICES

- Invite children to say what kind of worship they enjoy, and what kind of worship helps them to understand God's love the most.

- Copy dream bubble shapes onto sheets of paper and invite the children to write about their ideal church service.
- Gather the children's ideas together. Think of a creative way to present them to the rest of the church in a way that will make a practical difference to the style and content of your worship service at least once a month (minimum!).
- Be prepared to be the children's advocate and to ensure that your church takes their ideas seriously and puts some of them into practice. Otherwise the children will get the message that their ideas aren't really important, and your church doesn't really want to adapt to their needs.

### **WORSHIP THROUGH THE AGES PROGRAM**

- Invite different people of different ages to work together and present some of the different eras of biblical worship from the chapter 'From Eden to Everlasting'.
- They can present their era in any way they like, but encourage them to be creative and to focus on the way in which different generations, especially the children, may have been involved in the worship.
- Put on a program presenting these different eras and inviting people to reflect on how your own church worship could be more intergenerational.

### **LEARNING MODE SURVEY**

- Ask your Sabbath School teachers or Children's Ministries Leader to create a mini workshop that explores people's learning preferences.
- Help people connect their preferred learning mode with the kind of worship experiences they might enjoy the most, to help everyone understand that we are wired by God to learn in different ways.
- This can help people to accept the need for different approaches within a church service, and help lay some of the foundations for multisensory intergenerational worship services.

# Questions and Answers

INTERGENERATIONAL WORSHIP IS SUCH A NEW CONCEPT FOR MANY PEOPLE THAT IT WILL NATURALLY BE CHALLENGING FOR THEM TO UNDERSTAND THE NEED FOR A DIFFERENT FORM OF WORSHIP.

SOME PEOPLE MAY FEEL ANXIOUS ABOUT CHANGE, OR WONDER WHETHER THIS KIND OF WORSHIP IS REALLY ADVENTIST, OR EVEN WHETHER IT IS EVEN VALID OR BIBLICAL.

USE THE QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS IN THE CHAPTER ON 'THE BIG QUESTIONS...' TO HELP YOU THINK ABOUT THE QUESTIONS PEOPLE MIGHT HAVE AND THE ANSWERS YOU COULD EXPLORE TOGETHER.

CREATE PLENTY OF TIME AND SPACE FOR PEOPLE TO TALK ABOUT THEIR HOPES AND FEARS.

WORK GENTLY AND WISELY WITH THE CHALLENGES OF CHANGE AND EXPLORE THE BEST TIMES AND PLACES TO START INTERGENERATIONAL WORSHIP.

# *The Big Questions About Intergenerational Worship*



PASTOR PAUL WAS passionate about children's ministries. So he was really excited when he had the opportunity to attend a special conference, just for children's pastors. He went with a mission to learn how to help the children in his church enjoy the Sabbath morning services. He always tried to have a very interesting children's story. But he didn't really know how to meet their needs during the rest of the service.

One morning everyone at the conference was invited to experience an intergenerational worship service. Paul was totally inspired! Never before had he experienced a service that was so engaging, so creative, so active and yet so worshipful! Although the service was based around the simple and familiar story of the lost sheep, he came away with all kinds of new and inspiring perspectives. 'This is what I've been looking for!' he thought, 'this is what I want everyone to experience at my church! We might not be able to do a service like this every week, but maybe we could do it once a month, or even once a quarter to begin with...'

Paul bought the DVD of the service to take back to his home church. Within a couple of weeks he had set up a meeting to show the DVD and discuss the possibilities for Fairview Church. As he watched the service again, he felt even more convicted that this was the way forward for his church. As the final blessing drew to a close Paul switched off the DVD and turned, smiling and hopeful, towards the key leaders in his church.

‘So, what do you think?’ he said. ‘I’m very excited about how this kind of service can reach the needs of everyone in our church, and especially the children. I’d like to start doing a service like this at least once a quarter...’ There was a long and skeptical silence... The head elder cleared his throat. ‘Well, that was a nice little program for the children, but what’s wrong with the way we’ve always done things? The children get a good story each week, and they’ve had a nice Sabbath School. Isn’t that enough?’

‘And won’t the grown ups miss out if we do a service like this? It wasn’t exactly theologically stimulating...’

‘I was a bit uncomfortable with that action song... I’m not sure children should move around that much when they’re praising God... Isn’t it a bit irreverent?’

‘Well, I really enjoyed it,’ admitted Sue, the children’s ministries leader. I think we do need to have services that involve the children in different ways. I’m sure they’d enjoy church so much more. But that service took a lot of preparation, I can tell, and who has the time to do all that?’

‘I’m concerned about the older generations. Think about Miss Gilbert. She’d never understand a service like this! She’d be so upset...!’

Pastor Paul had a suggestion. ‘Why don’t we write down all the questions and concerns that people might have? Then we can think about them and see if we can find some helpful answers.’

Here are the questions and some of their answers. What answers would you have suggested?

## **WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE WAY WE'VE ALWAYS DONE CHURCH?**

- There's nothing wrong with the way we have always done church. There are just some new and different ways to do church that will help us to meet our objective of helping our children to become followers of Jesus and to attract more people from our local community. It was good to use a horse and wagon in the days of the pioneers, but now it's even better to drive a car or fly a plane across the country.
- The important aspects of our church services will remain. There will still be hymns, and prayers and an offering and inspiration from the Bible. But they may be done in different ways.
- The traditional format for church was good and simple and orderly. But now we understand more about how we learn best, how people worshipped actively and creatively in Bible times, and the vital importance of helping children to understand that they can enjoy church and be inspired, too.

## **IS INTERGENERATIONAL WORSHIP BIBLICAL?**

The answers to this question can be found in the chapter 'From Eden to Everlasting'. In summary:

- The Bible describes several very different worship styles, all of which were valid.
- The styles of worship in the Bible were shaped by the times and context in which the people were worshipping.
- Several forms of worship in the Bible clearly involve all ages and value each person's unique contribution to the experience.
- Some of the most detailed descriptions of worship experiences were the feast days that God gave to the children of Israel, which included making and eating special food, building shelters, lighting candles, sacrificing animals, movement, activity, music, prayer and celebration.

## **IS IT REVERENT?**

Reverence is a complex concept with wide cultural variations. So we need to allow for some diversity in understanding what it means for us today, and what it means in relation to an intergenerational worship service.

- Reverence in the Bible can be expressed in stillness and silence and bowed heads, but it can also be found in movement, celebration and music and laughter.
- Reverence is about respecting God and our relationship with Him, trusting Him, obeying Him and humbly learning about His rich character and His will for our lives.
- When children are being energetic, creative, honest and spontaneous they are being children, they are not being irreverent. Jesus was happy with the worship of the children who filled the temple with their joyful songs. No doubt there were also a few of them running around after the chickens and sheep that Jesus had released as He overturned the temple market stalls.
- Activities designed to help people experience God's love, pray in creative ways, create objects in response to a Bible story, make the sound effects for a Bible story, use percussion instruments and do actions during a praise song are not irreverent. They are ultimately focused on God and helping us to grow closer to Him and praise Him.
- Each church needs to explore for itself what reverence means during an intergenerational worship service.

### **ISN'T IT GOING TO BE VERY CHILDISH?**

Services designed to involve children will, inevitably, have some child-focused and child-friendly components.

- 'Childish' means different things to different people. Find out what it means for the people who ask this question.
- Make it clear in every service that you don't expect anyone to do anything that they don't want to do, or that would make them feel uncomfortable. Not everyone has to make the sound effects for your story or do all the actions for the songs. This kind of 'childishness' is optional.
- Jesus invites us all to humble ourselves and become 'as little children'. Children are naturally trusting, loving, accepting, forgiving, energetic, creative, honest and spontaneous. How can these aspects of child-likeness be our strengths as adults?

- Invite people concerned about the involvement of lively children in parts of the service to look for inspiration and Christ-likeness in these simple activities.
- Encourage people to understand the vital importance of involving children when they are young if we want them to stay in the church when they are older—childishness is also about winning the hearts of children for Jesus so they'll want to follow Him all their lives.

## **HOW WILL THE ADULTS BE FED SPIRITUALLY BY ACTIVITIES AND SERVICES THAT INCLUDE THE CHILDREN?**

This is a common question and a special concern for many people who are used to traditional services with forty-minute sermons. It's important to address it well.

- Encourage adults to be responsible for finding their own spiritual food. When services are based on Bible stories and themes, adults can prayerfully find inspiration from them just as they find inspiration when they read their Bible.
- Some churches hold in depth Bible studies and discussions at a different time during the week, or they decide that Sabbath School is the place for more complex theological ideas and debate. They choose to make their worship service accessible and understandable for people of all ages as an intentional part of their evangelistic strategy.
- Provide a short 5-7 minute, focused and inspiring sermonette as part of the intergenerational service. Children can sit and listen for a few minutes, or be involved in a quiet activity whilst the adults listen. Skilled preachers can speak in ways that inspire the adults whilst keeping the attention of most of the children. Study the parables of Jesus—short (most less than 5 minutes), easy to remember, interesting, and inspiring for both adults and children.
- Provide some thought-provoking and challenging questions to help them reflect on the Bible story at a deeper level.
- Inform people of the theme in advance of the service. Provide a reading list of inspiring passages from the Bible and other familiar and inspirational books, from various sources, so that members can develop their thinking and ideas around the topic.
- Some intergenerational service formats provide opportunities for

people to experience the Bible topic at a deeper level (see 'Flow Church' in the chapter titled 'Different models of intergenerational worship').

## **WHAT ABOUT THOSE WHO AREN'T COMFORTABLE WITH THIS STYLE OF WORSHIP?**

A church that wishes to provide intergenerational services to meet the needs of the majority of their congregation isn't going to please everyone, all the time, in every service. Some churches have found different ways of managing this:

- Listen to the fears and concerns of those who are not comfortable with your intergenerational worship services. Show you understand their concerns before trying to help them understand your goals and hopes.
- See below for ideas about
- Provide a simultaneous, small, traditional service in another room in the church.
- Show an inspiring DVD of a traditional service from a large church, or a service from camp meeting, etc. in another room in the church.
- Have a formal or traditional service as often as you have an intergenerational service.
- See the end of this chapter for more ideas about how to manage critical and challenging church members.

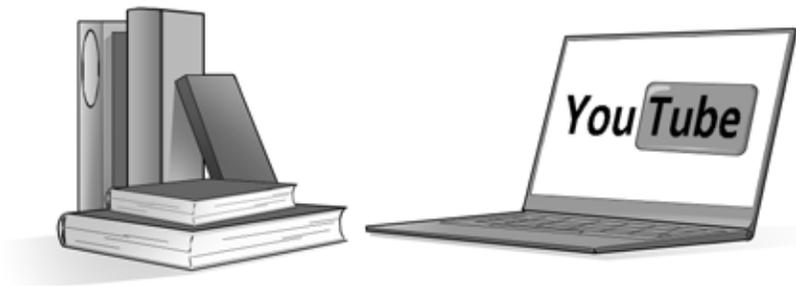
## **HOW WILL WE EVER FIND THE TIME TO PLAN THIS KIND OF SERVICE?**

- Start by holding an intergeneration service once a quarter, so that you have plenty of time to develop your ideas and plan a service. Once you have done two or three services you will work out how long things take and how to delegate responsibility for the different segments.
- Use and adapt prepared programs to save time, such as those on [www.lightlive.org](http://www.lightlive.org), or those done by other churches.
- If your church is big enough to have a pastoral team, then you may be able to give the main responsibility to one of the team members.

- Some churches invite a different family each month to lead out in the intergenerational service, so families only have to plan a service every few months, to spread the responsibility.

## WHERE CAN WE LEARN HOW TO PLAN GOOD INTERGENERATIONAL WORSHIP SERVICES?

- Reading books like this one will help you learn how to plan intergenerational worship services. For other titles see the resources section at the end of the book.
- Find out whether there are any churches in your area that hold intergenerational worship services, and visit them for inspiration. You will learn from their approach, and hopefully be inspired by their different ideas.
- Download intergenerational worship program outlines from websites like [www.lightive.org](http://www.lightive.org). They will help you learn how to plan and balance a service and provide you with hundreds of program ideas.
- Explore 'YouTube' for uploaded videos of intergenerational or all-age worship services that you can watch.



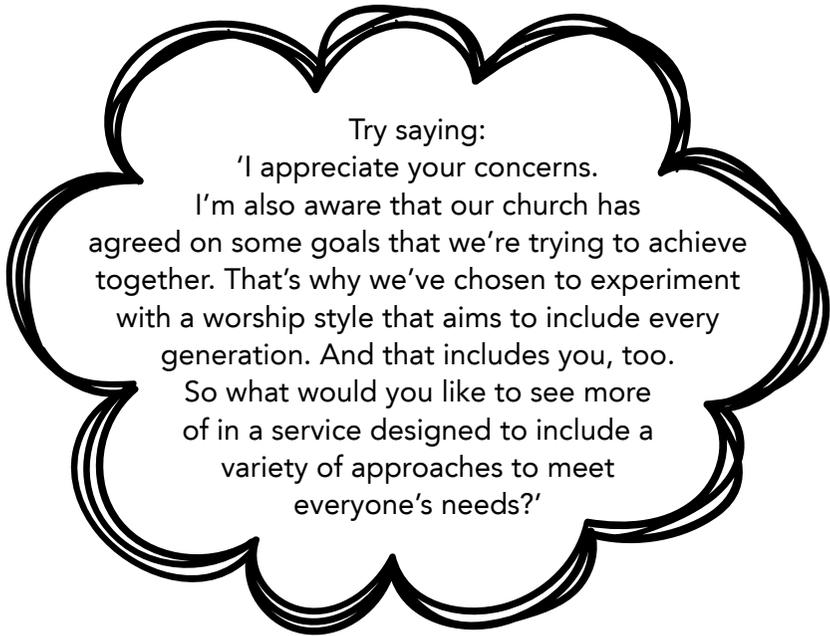
- Some churches live-stream their services on the Internet for others to watch, so you can use these for learning, training and inspiration, too.
- Children's Ministry Conferences, Children's Pastors' Conferences, Worship Conferences and Church Planters' Conferences may also include workshops and seminars on planning intergenerational worship services.

## MANAGING CRITICAL AND CHALLENGING PEOPLE

It's not always easy to manage those who challenge us but here are some suggestions that may be helpful:

- Pray for those who are critical of you as well as those who are supportive. Ask God to give you His loving wisdom to manage and forgive the challenging people, especially when their comments hurt you.
- If possible, arrange a specific time for them to talk to a couple of you, in private, about their concerns.
- Invite them to help you by summarizing their three biggest concerns, in three sentences or short paragraphs, and letting you read these in advance of the meeting, so you can plan a supportive and positive response.
- Use active listening techniques as they talk about their concerns, summing up what they are saying to check you've heard them correctly. This process can calm both of you down and take the heat out of an argument. Listen to what they have to say first. Then ask them to listen to your concerns.
- Look for the real concern under their complaints and critical comments. Are they mourning the loss of a familiar worship service? Are they afraid that the new kind of worship is unbiblical or worldly? Does the extra noise hurt their ears because of their hearing aid? Are they concerned because their idea of reverence is different to yours? Are they frustrated because they believe that they should have an in-depth theological sermon to inspire them each week? They may not be aware of their greatest underlying concern. Say things like: 'Help me to understand what bothers you the most—what you're most afraid of—what you miss the most... etc.' Once you both understand their concerns, it can be easier to talk about different ways to manage them, and easier to present your opinions in a way that they can appreciate.
- Ask yourself some of the following questions, and act on the answers that the Holy Spirit whispers in your heart:
  1. How can I let this person know that their perspective has been accepted and understood?
  2. How can I let this person know that their contribution to church life over the years has been appreciated?
  3. How can I comfort this person's distress, anger or fear?

4. How can I leave this person feeling spiritually encouraged?
5. How can I manage this conversation so that the person feels respected and leaves with dignity?
6. How can I show practical support for this person?
7. How can I show this person how much God loves them?



# *When And Where Shall We Worship Together?*

ONCE YOUR CHURCH has a vision for intergenerational worship, and your congregation understands what it means and why it's important to worship together, it's time to get practical. Now you need to think about the best time and place for your intergenerational worship service, and who you need to have on your team.

## **WHEN SHALL WE HOLD OUR INTERGENERATIONAL SERVICES?**

- Every week?
- Every month?
- Once a quarter?
- Sabbath morning, Sabbath afternoon, Friday evening or some other time?



The timing and length of your intergenerational services are important things to think about.

How often can your church realistically manage to organize and run an effective intergenerational worship service? If your team is small and busy, maybe you need to start by planning one intergenerational service a quarter, until you all develop the skills, confidence and ideas to do them more often. It's much better to do a good service four times a year, than to do a less effective service and have people lose confidence in the approach. Start in a way that you and your team can manage comfortably and sustain easily.

Would it be best to hold your intergenerational services as a replacement for the usual Sabbath morning service once a month or so? This helps to reinforce the message that intergenerational worship is a valid form of worship for the whole church.

Or would it be best to start by holding your intergenerational services at another time, so that people can slowly grow into the concept? If you hold your services on Sabbath afternoon then maybe families from nearby churches would come and worship with you, and perhaps share the responsibility for planning different aspects of the service. Other people could also come and see what intergenerational services are like, so that they can wonder about starting them in their own church. They can still attend their usual church in the morning, if it isn't too far away.

On the other hand, there may be lots of people in your congregation who just wouldn't come to an afternoon service, for all kinds of reasons, so an afternoon service may not be as intergenerational as you'd like it to be.

### **HOW LONG SHOULD OUR SERVICE BE?**

How long should an intergenerational service be? 50-70 minutes is usually plenty of time. The younger the average age of the children, the shorter the service needs to be. It's better to do a shorter service well, than to struggle to fill the time of a longer service. People don't usually complain about having a short service! And if you have lots of different activities, the time will fly past!

### **WHAT'S THE BEST PLACE TO HOLD OUR INTERGENERATIONAL SERVICES?**

Many churches that have intergenerational services choose to hold them in their usual church sanctuary. This makes an important statement that intergenerational worship is Biblical, desirable, positive and no less important or worshipful than more traditional worship services. Using the sanctuary space for the variety of worship experiences that may happen in an intergenerational service places equal value on the variety of learning styles that God has given us. Traditional church services are filled with lots of wonderful things for verbal learners, such as singing, praying, reading and preaching, but not much for visual and kinesthetic learners. Many of us have picked up the strange idea that if creativity, art, food (apart from Holy Communion) or movement is involved in a worship service, then it ought to happen in a different

room. It's as if we're saying that these activities are somehow less holy than verbal forms of worship.

So what message does that give to the children, and to adults who aren't verbal learners (most of us!)? Are our natural and preferred styles of learning and worship inferior to those who are most comfortable with verbal worship? I don't think so!

We may need to ask ourselves why we think some activities are OK in church and others aren't? Or, how can we adapt our sanctuary so that there are appropriate spaces for the different kinds of intergenerational worship activities we may want to do? One church arranged their chairs to make lots of space for people to be actively involved in the retelling of a Bible story. Another chose to make a creative space in their church and placed tables with different worship activities around the walls.

When a new church was being built, one congregation decided to make sure their main worship area had easy-clean floors, flexible seating, and plenty of space for people to move around. A church meeting in a large, old building still needed to move into another room for some of the worship activities, because of the inflexible layout of their sanctuary, but it made the fellowship hall as worshipful as possible, and made it clear that the worship activities in the hall were just as much 'church' as those that took place in the sanctuary.

Jesus worshipped and taught in all kinds of places, and often where people were eating together, sharing feasts, simple suppers and picnics. The place wasn't as important as the worship activities that were taking place. It is His *presence* that makes a place holy, and He is present with us all the time. He wasn't happy when people used His temple for material gains and to exploit others. But He made it clear that He was perfectly happy with the children shouting His praises in the temple, even when the church leaders complained about their lack of 'reverence'<sup>9</sup>!

We also need to be practical when some of the worship activities involve movement and mess. So there may be times when some, or all,

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<sup>9</sup> Matthew 21:15-16

of your intergenerational worship service may take place in the fellowship hall, or even outside in a park, forest or farm.

It's important to be sensitive to the culture and expectations of your congregation, whilst at the same time honoring the learning and worship needs of each person in the group. The most important thing is that everyone understands that their learning style and worship preferences are of equal value to everyone else's—not so inferior that they are relegated to the back room, and not so superior that they have the right to dictate how everyone else should worship. It's about valuing diversity, and respecting each other's differences, beliefs, values, skills, gifts and preference.

# *Let's Create an Intergenerational Worship Service!*

SO YOU WANT TO plan an intergenerational worship service, but you're not really sure where to start? Here's one model, but you can easily adapt the ideas to your own context. Try some different approaches, see what works best for you, and ring the changes occasionally to keep you, your team, and your church, creative, inspired and motivated.

## **CHOOSING THE BIBLE STORY OR TOPIC**

Sometimes choosing the story is the hardest part! There are hundreds of stories and themes in the Bible, so, which one will be the best story to choose? Here are some ideas to launch you off that blank page.

- Inspiration starts with prayer and Bible study, so meet with your team and pray about your choice of theme.
- Read a short passage from the Bible together and explore it in different ways, to see if the Holy Spirit brings any themes or ideas to your attention.



- Choose a familiar story to begin with, because you may already have a few creative ideas you can develop.
- Think about the season or other calendar events that might inspire you, such as harvest thanksgiving, national holidays, the church calendar, or even sports events—like the Olympics!
- Following a theme can be useful as it saves you time wondering what to do for your next service.
- The parables of Jesus were often designed for intergenerational story-telling, and they are rich with creative possibilities and ideas. As they are stories you may feel freer to experiment with them and use your imagination to enrich the experience.
- Or you could go through the life of Jesus, or another inspiring Bible character.
- If you're less experienced in intergenerational worship, you might prefer to choose a full program from [www.lightlive.org](http://www.lightlive.org) and adapt it for your needs.

## **EXPLORING THE STORY AS A TEAM**

This can be an exciting part of the planning! Be open to all kinds of inspiration. Choose someone to write down the ideas so that none of the scraps are lost or wasted—you never know when they might be useful, now or in the future.

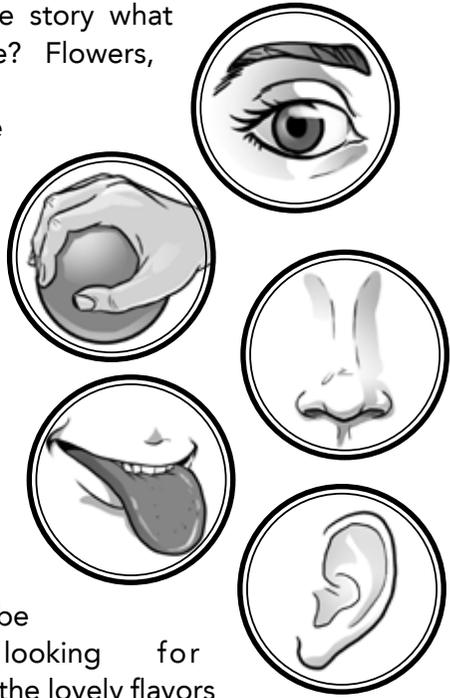
Here are some creative ways you can begin exploring the story together.

## **THE MULTISENSORY APPROACH**

Take one sense at a time and wonder how you might experience the parable of 'The Lost Sheep' through each of the senses.

- Vision – If you were inside the story, what would you see? What colors would there be? Green, beige desert, blue water, whitish sheep, etc. What pictures come into your mind when you hear this story? Fields, hills, shrubs, a Biblical shepherd, a crook, a small village, a wolf, etc. What contemporary visual images and metaphors might help you to understand and experience this story better? Losing the family pet, such as a hamster lost in the house, or a dog out on the streets, etc...

- Smell – If you were inside the story what smells might you experience? Flowers, grass, sheep, etc...
- Sound – If you were inside the story, what sounds would you hear? Sheep bleating, footsteps and hooves on grass, stone and sand, streams running past, bees, flies and birds, a shepherd counting his sheep and naming them one by one, the shepherd calling the name of the lost sheep, lots of rejoicing, etc..!
- Taste – If you were in the story, what tastes might you experience? The shepherd might be thirsty and hungry when he was looking for the lost sheep. There would be the lovely flavors of the party when he'd found his sheep, etc...!
- Touch – If you were in the story, what would you feel through your skin? The smooth wood of the shepherd's crook; the cool soft grass underfoot; the rough dry desert and stony roads; thorny shrubs around the lost sheep; the weight of the sheep around the shoulders; the soft, greasy fleece of the sheep; the hugging of friends at the party, etc.
- Write all your sensory ideas down because they might inspire you with fresh ways to help everyone in the congregation experience the story.



## THE GODLY PLAY APPROACH TO EXPLORING A STORY

Use Jerome Berryman's Godly Play questions to help you wonder about the story together:

- What do you like best about this story?
- What's the most important thing in the story for you?
- Where are you in the story? Or which part of the story is most about you?

- Is there any part of the story we can leave out and still have all the story we need?

If you like, you can experience more of the story in Godly Play style by spending time making or writing something that explores what this story means to you. Provide quality craft materials and allow everyone 15-20 minutes to work. You don't need to show each other what you've created, but the process may help you to come up with even more ideas to enrich your intergenerational service.

## **PUTTING TOGETHER A SERVICE**

Write each aspect of the service on a different sheet of paper:

- Welcome and introductions
- Hymns, songs and music
- Scripture reading
- Prayer
- Offering
- Optional experiences
- Intergenerational connection
- Bible Story experience
- Questions for reflection
- Closing activity

Then pass the papers around your group and invite each person to scribble down any ideas they have for each activity, inspired by the Bible story or theme. Or work in twos. This will give you a rich collection of ideas that you can develop into a well-rounded service together. Keep all these papers safe. They may inspire you with good ideas for another service.

## **THE RANDOM CONGREGATION PERSPECTIVE**

Once you've gathered your thoughts and ideas and you're in the last stages of developing your program outline, it's a good idea to take a random congregational perspective. You can do this in several different ways, but basically you need to look at your ideas from the perspective of a random sampling of your congregation. How will a

toddler, young child, teenager, young adult, single parent, married couple with no children, middle aged person, someone with special needs, an elderly person who finds walking difficult, someone who is feeling lonely and sad, and someone who doesn't hear very well, someone from another country, etc. experience your service? What will they enjoy the most? What might make them feel uncomfortable? What messages will they take away with them?

You can do this by putting the names of everyone in your church in a hat and picking out 8-10 names at random. Then imagine they're telling someone about the service they've just attended—what are they likely to say? Or make it less personal by giving each member of your committee 3 or 4 index cards. Ask them to write a sentence or two to create a mini-profile of the kind of person who might attend your service. Describe their age, gender, family life, gifts, interests, how they like to learn and what they might be hoping to get from the service. Then shuffle the cards and keep them safe. Each time you plan a service choose 6-8 of the profile cards and wonder how each person might experience the worship service you're planning to do.

By thinking about your service through other people's thoughts, tastes, gifts, learning styles, etc., you can check whether your goals for the service will be met, and adjust your plans to create an inspiring, intergenerational worship experience.

### **THEMING THE SERVICE**

Whenever you can, shape all the parts of your worship service around the ideas and themes in the story. Here's a possible service outline for an intergenerational worship service based on the parable of 'The Lost Sheep'. It shows how a simple story can inspire every part of your worship service. You can even use this as a sample outline for your first service, to help you build confidence and get started.



## **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION TO THE THEME OF THE DAY**

Welcome everyone, and, if possible, invite the people to welcome and greet the people around them.

- You could show a short video clip of sheep in a field as a backdrop whilst you welcome everyone to the service.
- Each person could say introduce themselves saying their name, and why they like sheep, or why Jesus is their Good Shepherd.

## **SONGS AND HYMNS**

Choose 3-4 songs to be used during the service, and include at least one for children, one contemporary song, and one hymn that older people will enjoy.

- Choose hymns and songs about sheep and The Good Shepherd, including at least one hymn older people may appreciate such as 'The Lord is My Shepherd' or 'The King of Love my Shepherd is'.

## **SCRIPTURE**

There are lots of different ways to read the scripture in church and this is an excellent opportunity for involving people from several generations.

- Invite someone to read Psalm 23, but show the words and pictures on a PowerPoint as well. Invite people in the congregation, of different ages, to choose, photograph or draw pictures that illustrate the different verses and phrases in the psalm.
- Or show more of the sheep in the field video clip while several people read a verse each.
- Or invite someone to play a familiar tune as quiet background music while the scripture is being read.

## **OFFERING**

It's often possible to find a creative and more interactive way to collect your offerings. Try to find an alternative way to collect the gifts for God that picks up a theme from your service.

- Before the service, photocopy or stamp sheep shapes onto plain white envelopes. Give one envelope to each person before the offering. Invite them to put their offering in the sheep envelopes, and let the children gather up all the sheep and bring them to the front. Line a flat box with green velvet or grass-cloth so that the children can place the sheep in the safe pasture.

## **PRAYERS**

Try to do something creative with your prayers when possible.

- Prayer requests, thanks and praises can be written on cutout sheep shapes and gathered together so that anyone can be involved in the congregational prayer.

## **OPTIONAL EXPERIENCES**

Whenever possible, try to include something short and unexpected as part of your service.

- Invite a local Christian shepherd or sheep farmer to talk about his work for 5 minutes and what being a shepherd has taught him about God's love.
- Show a brief film clip of a child or animal being lost and then found again, to show the happiness of the reunion.
- Create a short quiz about sheep in the Bible.
- Offer a simple sheep craft that anyone can do at their own level. Provide each person with a small plastic bag containing air-drying dough or clay, and invite people to make a simple sheep. The sheep can be placed in a safe green pasture at the end of the service to symbolize their choice to follow the Good Shepherd. They can then be taken home if they wish. Or they can be left to dry and then be varnished and glued to a wooden plaque to make a picture for your church. Add a Bible verse if you wish, or an encouraging message.

## INTERGENERATIONAL CONNECTION

Try to include at least 5 minutes of intergenerational contact time, where adults and younger members can talk, make or do something together.

- Invite people to find a partner who is as different from them as possible, and introduce themselves. Then ask them to tell each other about a time when they were lost, and then found again. Most people have been lost and found at some time, and so it should be fairly easy to find something to talk about together.

## BIBLE STORY

There are several different ways you can involve children in this story. Remember that Jesus told the simple story in only a few sentences. Yet it is full of meaning for everyone in your congregation, young and old. Pray that when you tell the story the Holy Spirit will interpret it to each person in the best way possible.



- Dress up someone as the Shepherd, with a wooden crook, and provide sheep masks, etc. for any children who want to be sheep.
- Tell the story in an interactive way, inviting the congregation to do actions and sound effects, if they wish—swishing of grass, clip clop of hooves on stones, ‘Ouch’ when anything sounds painful, etc.
- Or ask the children to make simple sheep with their names on, or write their name on the underside of a plastic sheep. Have a ‘shepherd’ gather the sheep into the fold during the appropriate part of the story, and to name each sheep as he puts them into the fold. But one sheep is lost. Invite the child whose sheep has been lost to help the shepherd look for it (make sure the child won’t be upset by this). Give everyone a small treat to celebrate when the sheep has been found!

## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

In case some of the adults and young people need to think more deeply about the parable, you can supply the following questions on the screen, or on a handout they can take away. Here are some sample questions reflecting on the story of The Lost Sheep.

## THINKING ABOUT JESUS' PARABLE

'See that you do not look down on one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven.' Matt 18:10 NIV. Our children's guardian angels look upon the face of God.

- How might the faces of the angels reflect the experiences of our children? Do their angels show joy when the children are happy and grief when they are sad?
- How might this affect the face and heart of God the Good Shepherd?
- How can you show the loving face of God to the children around you?

Think about a time when you inadvertently or deliberately walked away from God and were 'lost.'

- What hurt you the most?
- Did you realize that you were lost?
- Did you hope someone would come and find you?
- What would have been the best way to look for you and bring you home?
- Who are the lost sheep that you love? What can you do to help them find their way again?

Our Shepherd God loves every single sheep.

- How does He feel when any of His sheep or lambs wander away?
- Do we feel the Shepherd's heart of sadness when someone wanders away from God?
- What can we do to help keep everyone safely in the flock?
- Do we get tired, hurt and hungry on the journey to find the lost?
- How can we help support those who are looking for the lost?

- How can we keep looking for them even when no one else seems to care?

‘When he finds it [the sheep] he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home.’ Luke 15:5 NIV.

- In what ways are we willing to carry the lost back to the fold, or should we make them ‘walk’ back on their own feet?
- How do we celebrate when a sheep returns to the fold?
- Are we willing to go out of our way to join in a celebration?
- How ‘lost’ does someone need to be before we can celebrate their return?

Wondering about the story:

- What do you like best about this story?
- Which character in the story is most like you?
- What does this story tell you about God’s love for you?

## **CLOSING ACTIVITIES**

It’s good to close with a short and interesting activity that reinforces the message of the day, or gives people something to take away.

- Before the service print out lots of sheep outlines – you can find simple images on the Internet or in a children’s coloring book. Copy the verse Matthew 18:14 onto the sheep, one word on each sheep. Hide these around the church and let the children search for them at the end of the service. Then have them line up in the right order so that the congregation can read the verse when the children hold up their sheep. Invite the church to commit to keeping the children safely connected to Jesus.
- Thinking of you cards. Provide attractive cards, and the names and addresses of people who no longer come to your church, for whatever reason. Invite people to chose a person and send them a card.
- Invite everyone to a mini celebration after church. The children can make and serve sheep-themed snacks (add cream or cottage cheese to crackers and add stick snacks to make legs, etc.)

## **OTHER PRACTICALITIES**

As well as planning the service you will need to think about some other important details:

- How will you lay out the chairs and platforms, etc., in the worship room so that everyone can see, hear and participate easily?
- Do you need any scenery or props to help create an atmosphere or tell the story? If so, who will source or make them?
- Will you have all the worship activities in one room, or will you need extra space for creativity in a different room? Will you hand people kits for the creative activities? Or will you prepare one pack of activity materials per row, or per group of people?
- Who will be responsible for organizing and sourcing materials for each of the parts of the service?
- Who will be responsible for the music and where will the singers and musicians stand?
- Will you use hymn and songbooks, will you print programs with lyrics, or will you display the words on a screen using a PowerPoint presentation?
- Who will be responsible for managing any copyright issues connected with the music and video clips you might use?
- When will you meet again to check the program, to adjust any details that need tweaking, and to make sure everyone involved knows exactly what they are doing and when they are doing it?
- What other practical details do you need to think about?

## **MEETING YOUR OBJECTIVES**

Once you've made an outline of the service, and chosen the activities, recheck that your planned service meets your objectives. You may not be able to meet every goal in every intergenerational service, but you'll want to meet most of them. So it's helpful to ask yourselves the following questions:

- How might this worship service involve, engage, and inspire each person in the congregation?
- What are the different verbal, visual and sensorimotor worship experiences that you're planning to use in this service?

- How does this worship service provide opportunities for each person to learn from the insights, creativity, inspiration and wisdom of those from different generations?
- How does this worship service include the spiritual gifts and skills of children?
- How will each of the five senses be used to experience the Bible story and the worship?
- What sense will children make of the service? What will they experience, and what messages about God will they remember and 'take away' with them?
- How will this service meet the spiritual needs (for love, learning and growth, worship, serving others, encouragement, inspiration, creativity and forgiveness, etc.) of each person in the congregation?
- How will this worship service enable each person to have a living experience of Jesus Christ?
- How will each person experience the love of God, and the love that other people in the congregation have for them too? And what opportunities will they have to share God's love with others of different generations?
- How will each person experience being part of the living body of Christ – where each person is gifted, special and valuable, regardless of age ability, gender, class, education and skills, etc.?
- How will this worship service encourage each person in the congregation along their journey to becoming more like Jesus?

## **GIVING YOUR SERVICE AN IDENTITY**

Creating an identity may not sound like an urgent priority—but it will be very helpful to have a punchy name, and perhaps a logo, for promoting and advertising your service. You will certainly need one that's simpler, shorter, more fun and easier to say than 'Intergenerational Worship Service', and the acronym 'IWS' isn't very catchy either!

If you have any graphic artists or media consultants in your network you might like to ask them for help and advice.

## **CREATING A 'BRAND' FOR YOUR INTERGENERATIONAL SERVICES**

- A clear name and identity is especially important if you want to attract people from your local community to your fresh new services.
- You can create a brand name with your leadership team, or hold a competition inviting your members to think of suitable name.
- Search the Internet and make a list of names that other churches are using, to give you some ideas and kick-start your creativity.
- Samples of names other churches have used are: Prism; SoulSpace; Revive; InSpire; The Mix; Alive!; K'nect; Together; Blend; The Ark, etc.
- Ask people of different ages and backgrounds to help you choose the best name.
- Think about your name from different angles. Is it snappy and welcoming? How does it convey your objectives? What will it mean to the other cultures in your community? What does it mean to the older and younger people in your congregation? Etc.
- Using a standard font makes it easier to add to your promotions.
- Ask the graphic designers in your congregation to play around with the name in simple but creative ways. For example: 'Prism' could be printed with each letter in a different color of the rainbow; K'nect could use similar letters to the name of the K'nex toy, etc.
- Use your brand name and on your posters, bulletins, buttons/badges, t-shirts and flyers/leaflet to help promote your service in an appealing way.

## **WHAT ABOUT A LOGO?**

- A logo may be less important than a name, but it can still be very useful.
- The logo usually incorporates the brand name of your services, so they will need to be designed together.
- A logo can be used in creative ways to promote your services: on banners, bulletins, t-shirts, invitation cards, etc.
- Order a catalogue of promotional gifts to help you explore the many ways in which you can use your logo as a witness.
- Visit [www.religioustshirts.co.uk](http://www.religioustshirts.co.uk) for some inspiring and creative ideas.

## **AND FINALLY...**

This chapter may have given you lots to think about! But don't be overwhelmed by all the details. These questions and ideas are just to help you work out what you need to do when you're starting to think about intergenerational services. These lists can prevent you from re-inventing wheels, or from making some of the mistakes that we made when we started doing intergenerational services!

If it all seems like too much work—go for a simpler option, such as adapting published programs. Or just pick and choose some of the ways to involve children in your services listed in the chapter 'Sixty simple ways to involve children in your worship services'.

And if something doesn't quite go to plan, don't worry—maybe what looked like a 'mistake' or a 'problem' was actually part of God's perfect plan for somebody in your congregation...

# Who's in Your Pews?

SITTING IN YOUR CONGREGATION, week after week, are people, young and old, with all kinds of hopes, needs and expectations.

Here's a sample of their thoughts to help you plan a service where each one of them will find inspiration and love, and the encouragement to grow closer to God.

## SOPHIE – 1

When I'm in church I just like to nap, or to cuddle up to mom and dad. Usually, as long as I'm close them, I'm fairly happy. But now I'm a bit bigger I want to explore and crawl and toddle around the pews.



I like feeling things and shaking them, and seeing if they make a noise! I also like to taste everything first, and it's fun putting things in my mouth!

I don't like sudden loud noises! They make me jump and then I cry. And I don't like just sitting still with nothing to see or do. I can see things best when they're up close and when I can touch them. Sometimes I yell, or sing, or make a noise and people tell me to be quiet and shush, but I'm not really sure what that means, or why I should be quiet in church.

I like it when people sing songs that I know. I like to clap and I like to shake bells and bang drums.

When I come to church I just need to know that I'm loved and safe and that the people around me are happy.

### **PETER – 3**

I'm not really sure about church. Sometimes it's a bit scary. I get told off for doing things in church that I don't get told off for doing at home or in the park, or in kindergarten, and I don't really understand why. I try to talk quietly, but I forget real easily...

I don't like sitting in the chairs at church. My feet dangle off the edge of the seat and they get all twitchy! So it's good when I can move around and do some action songs, or have a children's story.

I don't understand church at all. It's very long and boring so I don't listen because it doesn't make any sense to me. Even the children's story is a bit confusing sometimes. I like to do things and make things and run around, so it's a bit hard sitting on a chair for so long. And the carpet is so prickly I get itchy every time we kneel to say prayers!

Last week the pastor asked me to help him with his talk I had to unwrap some presents for him and that was the best church ever! Even though they weren't presents for me, he gave me a sticker for helping, and that was fun! Sometimes I try to draw pictures of Bible stories in church and animals, because I love them. But I don't like coloring in pictures. That's so boring! One week grandma gave me some modeling clay in church and I made an elephant, That was fun! I showed it to my Sabbath School teacher afterwards and she smiled and said it was very good, even though one of its ears fell off.

People tell me it's important to go to church and worship God. But I don't know what worship means, except sing and pray. And I don't really know why we go to church because I've never seen God there.

I wish church was just Sabbath School, because I like Sabbath School. But church is very boring most of the time, and I don't think it's very good for children.

### **ROBYN – 8**

I have ADHD and being in the church service is the hardest part of my week. I feel like I'll go crazy there sometimes. My mom understands.

We sit at the back and she brings lots of things to keep me interested. But I need to get up and move all the time. Sometimes people get cross with me. I can see their faces looking at me and mom as if we're being really bad and annoying them. It makes me sad.

I don't mean to bother anyone. I just can't help it. I sometimes wonder if God is mad at me too, because I can't concentrate and learn like other kids, and I can't read the Bible very well or memorize stuff.

My teacher understands. She lets me get up and wander around at the back of the class as long as I try to be quiet. I like to play with stuff while I listen. It helps a bit.

Mom wants us to be in church. I know she finds it hard to listen when she's looking after me. Sometimes she takes a CD home so she can hear the sermon when she's making supper. She gets very tired. It's hard looking after me on her own and no one ever comes to help her. I think it's because they don't like me. Maybe God doesn't like me, either?

## **BETH – 15**

I stay in the church service mostly because my parents bring me and I don't want to hurt their feelings. Sabbath school's great, because we have really interesting discussions. I believe in God and I want to follow Jesus, but I just don't 'get' church services. They seem to be stuck in some 19<sup>th</sup> century time warp. Most of the hymns are boring and some of them make no sense to me at all. How can I raise my Ebenezer when I don't even know what it is? I play with my phone a lot, and some of us text each other in church, just to get through. Occasionally we discuss the sermon...

Sometimes the sermons are OK. I like it when the preacher has an interesting PowerPoint presentation. And our youth leader actually showed a clip from a film a few weeks ago, and that was neat. But I want to hear sermons that help me with my every day life, like dealing with peer pressure, what to do with my life, how to comfort my friends whose parents are having a divorce, dealing with guilt...

I love art and beautiful things and I dream about using my talent in the church, but they only seem to want people who can play the piano and sing.



### JASON – 21

I come to church most weeks, and it's generally kind of OK. But it's not the spiritual highlight of my week. Friday nights some of the students and young adults get together to sing contemporary worship songs. We have a bit of a band going. And we take it in turns to lead discussions on things that are relevant to us, like relationships, sex, social justice, poverty, and the environment.

We've also been studying the life of Jesus and that's been pretty amazing. I come to church mostly because it's expected of me. And I do believe it's good for everyone to come together to worship. But I wish we sang the same songs in church that we sing on Friday nights—they really inspire me. Some of the old hymns are OK, too, I suppose.

I'm looking for sermons that ask me hard questions and make me think. I want to be stretched and challenged. I volunteer at a project for deprived children. I want to see my church make a real difference to people's lives. So I want to hear sermons that inspire people to social action so we can show God's love in our local community.

I'd like to discuss the sermon ideas with other people straight after the service, or even during it for a few minutes. I think there should be more connection between people in church, not just between the person in the pulpit and the congregation.

### **MAGDA – 35**

I'm a working mom with twins, and a husband who's stopped coming to church because he doesn't enjoy it any more. When I come to church I want to recharge my spiritual batteries to help me face another week.



I also want my daughters to enjoy coming to church. I don't want them to give up on it like their dad. But it's not easy. They're 11 now, and they have minds of their own.

I try to help them listen to the sermon by giving them creative challenges. Like asking them to draw a poster about one of the main ideas in the sermon, or getting them to write five quiz questions to ask each other at lunch time, or something like that.

Most weeks I just need to come to church and sit still long enough to feel God's love. So I'm happy if that's all that happens as long as the girls are enjoying the service. I wish my church would find more ways to involve children in their services. Lora and Lisa play their violins beautifully, but our church has some kind of rule that only baptized members can play in the main service... So they never get asked. Which is a shame. I think they'd feel really good if they were asked to play... And maybe their dad would come to listen...

### **GARY – 45**

I usually enjoy being in our church. Its services are very dignified and I play the old organ, which still has an excellent tone. But I am very worried about the lack of reverence I see today. It's getting worse all the time. People seem to forget that church is on holy ground and needs to be respected. Especially the children. I've never had any of my own, but if I did I'd make sure they learned how to still in church and listen. They've had their time in Sabbath School, and now they need to sit quietly so we can have our time.

Last month the Conference Children’s Ministries leader came to our church and did a children’s service! Absolute chaos! Children everywhere, moving around and doing actions and taking up the offering and making lots of noise! And she only spent 7 minutes talking to the adults... I was so angry I couldn’t even shake her hand. And then I heard some children saying how they wished church could be like that every week! Well, I’m so glad it isn’t!

### **TOM – 67**

I like my church the way it is right now. I think services should follow a predictable pattern because change is disruptive and unsettling, and worship needs to be orderly. I love the old hymns, and the organ playing. I find it really inspiring. I like the way our pastor preaches—clear and straight from the Bible. I wouldn’t want anything to change. Our services have stood the test of time and they usually bring me closer to God. Except when our youth group takes the service. I get quite worried about how secular our young people are these days—their songs and ideas are a long way from the ones I had when I was young. When they take the service I usually go and see my sister, and visit the church in her town.



### **HILDA – 78**

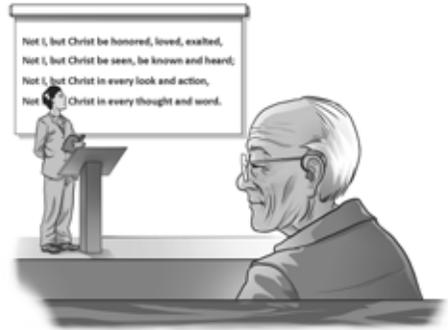
I know it sounds strange, but I’ve always been a child at heart. I loved my career as a grade school teacher, and I adore my seven grandchildren.

I hate to admit it, but enjoy teaching the Primary Sabbath School Class much more than going into church and having a traditional service. But our church has well-organized services. They’re fine. Our pastor is a good preacher and the singing is good. I have no real complaints. It’s down to me to try and get something inspiring out of the sermon. But

I would like church to be a place where I can bring my grandchildren and know they'll be happy... That's my biggest concern right now.

## FRED – 85

I want to come to church and find it's just the way it always has been. I love the old hymns. I find so much comfort in their familiar words and predictable melodies. Especially as I'm getting older. And I love the rhythm of the words in my worn old King James Version, and my 'Desire of Ages.'



I do find the seats in church a bit uncomfortable, and I get worried when the service goes on too long, because I don't want to walk out in front of everyone to go to the washroom. And I need to go much more often than I used to... I don't like too much noise around me either. My hearing aid amplifies everything and it can be so irritating! I can hear every pencil that drops and every shuffle of paper! So distracting!

All this technology in church confuses me a bit. I'm not quite comfortable with singing hymns from a screen instead of the old hymnbooks. But I don't want to upset anyone—not worth making a fuss. So I'll just be quiet and sit near the back. I can always switch my hearing aid off and read my Bible. Nothing can rock my faith after all these years!

On the other hand, I still remember how boring church was for me when I was a fidgety young lad! I used to plan all kinds of mischief in my head during the long sermons! And I can see that we need to make church more interesting for the children or we'll lose them. I've seen too many young people drift away and that's very sad. We need to listen to them, too. I like things the way they are, but that's not the most important thing. We need to act quickly to save our children. If our church services are turning them away from God, we'll have to answer for their loss...

# Thinking about it...

HOW ARE THESE  
PEOPLE SIMILAR  
TO, AND DIFFERENT  
FROM THE  
PEOPLE IN YOUR  
CONGREGATION?

THINK OF TWO PEOPLE  
IN YOUR CHURCH WHO  
WOULD HAVE VERY  
DIFFERENT RESPONSES  
TO YOUR CURRENT  
CHURCH WORSHIP  
AND WRITE WHAT YOU  
THINK THEY WOULD SAY  
IF THEIR STORIES HAD  
BEEN INCLUDED IN THIS  
CHAPTER.

HOW DOES  
UNDERSTANDING  
DIFFERENT PEOPLE'S  
PERSPECTIVES AND  
NEEDS HELP AND  
HINDER YOU AS YOU  
WORK TOWARDS  
DEVELOPING  
INTERGENERATIONAL  
WORSHIP SERVICES?

# *Social Media Tools For Busy Teams*

SOCIAL MEDIA AND INTERNET resources can provide you with lots of free tools and facilities to help you create and enrich your intergenerational worship services. They can save you time, money and effort, and add stacks of creativity to your program. If you're technology-shy—just ask a teenager to help you. Who knows how they'll be inspired and blessed by using their skills to support you?



## **TWITTER**

Twitter is a text-based messaging system that enables people to send short messages up to 140 characters in length. These are known as 'Tweets'. Although you can only send a short message—everyone who is following you will be able to read your tweet. Churches have found Twitter to be a quick and convenient way of communicating with their members.

Create a Twitter account at <https://twitter.com/signup>

Twitter can be used to:

- Inform your team about the time and venue for a planning meeting.
- Remind people about your intergenerational worship services.
- Share the theme for the week, and the Scripture reading, so that people can think about it in advance of the service.
- Send an encouraging Bible verse.
- Ask for helpers or for special props and materials you need for your service.
- Collect prayer requests during a service, or during the week.
- Invite feedback and comments after the service.
- Run a quiz or discussion during a service—by tweeting the questions to group leaders.

- Publicize answers to prayers.
- Tweet thought-provoking questions to the teens and adults during a service.
- Provide follow up to an intergenerational service by tweeting links to video-clips, family worship ideas, and other related inspiration on the Internet.
- Etc.

**How could your church use Twitter to facilitate and enhance its intergenerational worship experience?**



**PINTEREST**

Pinterest is a virtual and visual pinboard where you can save and share any ideas you find on the Internet. You can 'pin' any website link, picture, video clip, etc. to your pinboard. You can then see all your pinboards, and click on any picture to open up its original website, often with full instructions, recipes, or YouTube clips, etc.

Register for Pinterest at [www.pinterest.com](http://www.pinterest.com) and read the very brief and simple instructions about how to 'pin' and 'repin'; how to 'follow' other people with similar interests so you can see their ideas too; how to search the site for ideas using keywords; and how to use the site respectfully and legally.

Pinterest can be used to:

- Collect and share ideas for your intergenerational services with your whole team.
- Organize your ideas by making as many pinboards as you like and giving each one different title, such as 'Creative Prayer Ideas', 'Simple Bible Crafts', 'Community Service Ideas', etc.
- Or create one pinboard for each service, and invite the people on your team to pin any ideas from the Internet for crafts, games, snacks, etc. related to your Bible story theme.
- Add your own personal comments and ideas to each picture you 'pin'. So you could pin a simple craft idea, like making arks, and add a comment like 'Start collecting your cereal boxes for this

project!’

- View your collections of ‘pinned’ ideas during a teleconference or Skype meeting so that everyone can see what you are trying to describe, even though you are miles apart.
- Identify and connect with other people developing intergenerational worship services and other children’s ministry workers using the ‘Following’ facility.
- Search for ideas using key words via the ‘Search’ facility.
- View and pin ideas from other people’s collections of worship activities, Bible crafts, Bible snacks, Bible games, quizzes, posters, and video clips, etc.
- Etc.

**How could your church use Pinterest to enhance and facilitate its intergenerational worship program?**



## **FACEBOOK**

Facebook is another useful tool to help you create intergenerational worship services. Facebook is a social networking facility that enables people to connect with friends; communicate publicly on ‘Walls’, or privately by ‘Messages’; plan events and invite people to attend; share links and information; gather ideas; and share photographs, etc. New tools are being added all the time, so it’s important to keep up to date with the different ways in which you can use Facebook.

Sign up for a Facebook account at [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com)

You can use Facebook to:

- Communicate quickly and easily with your church members.
- Advertise your service and invite people to the ‘event’.
- Circulate prayer requests.
- Invite people to share their ideas with you.
- Share photos of events (check you have people’s permission to photograph them and their children first).
- Share links of worship songs you’d like people to hear and learn before a service.

- Ask people to save craft materials for your projects.
- Source props for your stories and services.
- Plan team meetings.
- Share agendas.
- Send links to other websites and ideas that may be useful.
- Share program plans with other churches involved in intergenerational worship.
- Etc.

**How else could your group use Facebook to facilitate your intergenerational service planning and communication?**



**SKYPE**

Skype is an internet-based communication system, like a phone, or video-phone. It enables you to communicate for free via your computers. If you have web-cams, and a small group, you can even see each other as you speak.

The sound is much clearer if everyone uses earphones, and mutes their microphone when they're not actually talking. If the call is poor quality, ring off and try again. Skype calls vary in quality, and this can be unpredictable and annoying, but it can be very convenient if your planning group is widespread, as you can all save travel time and costs.

Sign up for a Skype account at [www.skype.com](http://www.skype.com).

Skype can help you to:

- Have meetings without having to spend time and money travelling to a central venue.
- Involve someone in a meeting who can't physically attend the venue because of distance, child-care, bad weather, etc. The video facility means that you can all still see and hear each other.
- Enable people to watch your church service from a distance.
- Invite people to speak at your service even if they can't be there in person—perhaps saying a prayer, reading a scripture, or being interviewed about their mission work, etc.

- Teach a group of people how to do a simple craft project in advance of a program.
- Enjoy a group Bible study or prayer meeting together without leaving your home.
- Etc.

**How else could you use Skype to plan or enhance an intergenerational worship service?**



**GOOGLE**

Google is an Internet search engine with several other facilities that make it a very useful tool for intergenerational worship planning.

The obvious use of Google is to search for ideas and information to help you plan inspirational intergenerational services. But Google has other useful tools, and it is continually adding and upgrading its features.

Use Google Images to search for pictures for your bulletins, Power-Point presentations, children’s activities and crafts etc. Put a key word into the search facility and view lots of images quickly, so that you can choose the best ones for you.

Use Google Calendar to inform everyone in a group or team of important dates, meetings and events.

Use Google Drive ([www.drive.google.com](http://www.drive.google.com)) to share and work on documents, presentations or programs together. Anyone can be invited to add and edit a document, so you can all work together, but at different times, to plan and share your service and program ideas. You can also share the finished document with other churches that want to develop intergenerational ideas or adapt your program.

**How else could you use Google to help you plan inspirational, intergenerational worship services?**



## YOUTUBE

YouTube is a website where anyone can upload and broadcast their own videos. Find out how to use YouTube at [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com).

You can use YouTube to:

- Learn about intergenerational worship by watching other churches' services, to help build your own skills and confidence.
- Learn and share new worship songs.
- Source interesting and relevant video clips to enhance your worship experiences.
- Broadcast a film of your worship service so that it can be used to inspire or train others.
- Enable people who missed the service to watch it in their own time at home.
- Etc.

**How else could you use YouTube to enrich your worships?**

## STAYING ALERT TO NEW TECHNOLOGIES

New forms of social media and technology arrive on the market every year. Give the teenagers in your church the task of exploring new horizons, explaining how they work, and helping you to figure out how you could use them to enhance your worships.

# *Building Your Intergenerational Worship Team*

PASTOR JACK QUICKLY grasped the vision for intergenerational worship in his local church. He could see its enormous potential for ministering to the families in the church, attracting people from the local community and spiritually nurturing the children and young people. He also saw it as a way to help stem the slow flow of people leaving the church because they found it 'boring' and 'irrelevant'. Soon he was leading the intergenerational worship team, and finding creative ways to bring the Bible stories alive for the whole congregation.

Realizing that intergenerational worship services take extra time to plan and prepare, Pastor Jack's elders chose to support him by taking on some of his workload. The head elder coordinated the midweek prayer meetings, and the deacons and deaconesses became more involved in pastoral visitation. Pastor Jack also pulled together a gifted team of people with a vision and passion for intergenerational worship, to support him and to share the work of planning and preparing the services.

Intergenerational worship works best when teams of people work together. Sometimes a pastor has the time, energy, vision, gifts and commitment to organize intergenerational worship almost singlehandedly. But most pastors are already working under pressure and this ministry needs a team of dedicated lay people who can work together to create successful and inspiring intergenerational worships.

## **WHO MIGHT YOU NEED ON YOUR INTERGENERATIONAL WORSHIP TEAM?**

Each church has different needs and a small church will need a different kind of team to a very large church. But these are some of the people you may want to include in your intergenerational worship team:

- Pastor/leaders
- Intergenerational worship team coordinator (pastor or lay person)
- Bible story teller/worship leader
- Music coordinator
- Technical coordinator
- Creative coordinator
- Prayer coordinator
- Community outreach coordinator
- Other members

## POTENTIAL JOB DESCRIPTIONS FOR YOUR TEAM

The job descriptions listed below are just for your guidance and ideas. Each context is different—some churches will need all of these team members and others will work with just a handful of people, or a very energetic pastor. In smaller churches families could take it in turns to lead out in the intergenerational worship services. These checklists are simply to make sure that whoever is responsible for each part of the service is well-prepared and has thought carefully about the most important details.

Your church may need to cut back on some of these responsibilities, or add extra ones to the list. Or you may need to mix and match them between team members. Some may even be totally irrelevant in your context. So use them flexibly and don't be overwhelmed by them: they're just there to keep you on track.

## THE PASTOR

Your pastor is usually the key person to the success of intergenerational worship in your local church. This kind of worship may be a whole new concept for your pastor to grasp, as most pastors have not been taught the importance of all-age worship in seminary or in their internship. Most pastors have never experienced an intergenerational worship service, let alone led out in one. So be pa-



tient if your pastor takes a while to understand what you're trying to do. Involving him in the worship planning will help him to get a better feel for your vision and how you want to develop it in your local church.

The pastor needs to:

- Be fully-supportive of concept and ministry of intergenerational worship.
- understand the importance and theology of all ages worshipping together.
- Be the spiritual advisor and mentor of your planning team.
- Help you choose and explore the Bible story or theme that will be the focus of the intergenerational worship service.
- Be ready to handle any queries, concerns and fears that some of the members might have about intergenerational worship.
- Use his/her spiritual gifts and skills to support the intergenerational worship team and the services they plan together.
- Etc...

## **INTERGENERATIONAL WORSHIP TEAM COORDINATOR**

Someone needs to keep an eye on all the other coordinators and their teams. It's important to have someone with the overall vision and responsibility for an intergenerational worship service to make sure everything works together in harmony.

The intergenerational worship team coordinator needs to:

- Understand and believe in the importance of intergenerational worship.
- Attend training in intergenerational worship if it's available; visit churches who are experienced in this kind of worship; read books; watch DVDs of intergenerational worship; and explore on-line learning opportunities.
- Have a long-term vision for developing intergenerational worship services in the local church.
- Work closely with the pastor to choose suitable Bible stories and themes for the worship services.
- Encourage the worship team to explore the chosen Bible story as a group, from different angles and perspectives, and through prayer, discussion and creative activities, before planning the service.

- Be able to inspire their team and nurture their creativity.
- Ensure that each intergenerational worship service is well-balanced, focused, inspiring, Biblical and that it includes activities to meet the needs of different ages, cultures, preferences and learning styles.
- Keep each team member motivated and on target to reach their planning and preparation goals.
- Ensure that everything is ready and in its place well before the service is due to start.
- Be responsible for the smooth running of the service.
- Take time with the whole team to evaluate each worship service shortly after it takes place.
- Train up-and-coming local leaders in intergenerational worship.
- Share intergenerational worship ideas, learning, and resources with other interested churches.
- Keep good notes of the worship service outlines, scripts, activities, songs and prayers used, etc. so that they can be reused elsewhere and shared with other churches.
- Etc...

### **BIBLE STORY TELLER/WORSHIP LEADER**

The Bible story-teller, worship leader or anchor person has an important role in making sure that the intergenerational worship service runs smoothly. This person needs to fill any incidental space between worship activities with thoughtful, appropriate and nurturing comments,



especially if there are young children involved, or there is a slight hitch. It's important to maintain the dignity and confidence of everyone involved in the service! There'll be plenty of times when things don't quite go to plan, and some good, warm humor is the best approach to take! The worship leader or story-teller guides everyone through the Bible story or theme, so that each person leaves feeling inspired, closer to God, happy, peaceful, and very loved.

The Bible story teller/worship leader needs to:

- Understand and believe in the importance of intergenerational worship.
- Be a growing Christian who is passionate about helping others to experience Jesus.
- Attend training in intergenerational worship if it's available; visit churches who are experienced in this kind of worship; read books; watch DVDs of Christian story tellers; and explore on-line learning opportunities.
- Work closely with the pastor when developing suitable Bible stories and themes for the worship services.
- Explore the chosen Bible story with the rest of the worship team, and develop fresh and interesting ways to involve people in the story.
- Make the story as interactive as possible – using sensory activities, actions, and the other components of the service to build a multi-dimensional experience of the Bible story
- Speak clearly so that everyone can hear and understand.
- Etc...

## **MUSIC COORDINATOR**

One of the most important teams for successful intergenerational worship is the music team. Intergenerational worship needs a good supply of children's praise and worship songs with suitable backing tracks, or a small live band or keyboard player. Music inspires people and well-chosen songs and music add a vital dimension to the worship experience. Scripture songs can help people learn Bible verses; praise songs lift the heart to God; and action songs keep people awake and on their toes. The music coordinator needs to:

- Understand and believe in the importance of intergenerational worship.

- Understand the role of music within this ministry.
- Source fresh, new songs that appeal to all ages, especially songs that children will enjoy.
- Be able to lead out and teach new songs quickly and effectively.
- Liaise between musicians, singers and worship leaders in order to choose the most appropriate songs and music in a variety of styles.
- Make sure that there is at least one hymn or song that will appeal to each age group in the service.
- Nurture the music skills of young children and those learning musical instruments.
- Choose music to provide the background for other worship activities, such as creative prayer times, meditations, storytelling, offering and creative activities.
- Etc...

## TECHNICAL COORDINATOR

In most modern churches a technical coordinator is vital to the success and smooth running of an intergenerational service. Computers, projectors, sounds systems and lighting all need to be suitable, reliable, well-maintained and understood. The most important goals are to make sure that everyone can hear what they need to hear, everyone can see what they need to see, and the sound and visual systems don't cause any unnecessary interruptions and distractions.



The technical coordinator needs to:

- Manage the sound system so that everyone who is speaking can be heard.
- Check that everyone who needs a microphone will have access to one just before they need to use it.
- Keep all the technical systems working smoothly.

- Ensure that batteries are changed regularly, microphones are fully charged, and that there are back-ups and extra batteries for emergencies.
- Make sure that the loop system is available for people with hearing difficulties.
- Manage the sound effects, backing tracks and film clips so that the service progresses without hitches and glitches.
- Manage any PowerPoint presentations, and possibly be involved in creating the slides for songs, illustrations, things that everyone needs to read together, important information, announcements and practical instructions, etc.
- Manage any special lighting and effects needed during the service.
- Etc...

## **CREATIVE COORDINATOR**

The creative coordinator is the person that God has gifted to dream up, find and create any of the art and craft activities that you might need for your services. All the creative activities chosen must help to help illustrate the Bible story or theme—they are not just time-fillers, or things to keep the children quiet while the grown-ups listen to a sermon...

The creative coordinator will need to:

- Choose appropriate craft projects that will enhance the congregations understanding of the Bible story or theme.
- Choose projects that will appeal to all ages and levels of skill.
- Check that the projects are simple, quick and produce reliably good results.
- Make sure that any art and craft projects fit within their allocated time slot in the program, including the time needed for people to move around and settle into the task.
- Source the art and craft materials, using recycled materials where possible.
- Ask the congregation to save and donate useful art and craft materials.
- Create clear instructions for the projects that people can refer to if they get stuck.

- Lay out the craft tables or areas neatly and with plenty of space for people to work. Or prepare ready-to-use creative bags that can be given out during the service, and used where people are already sitting.
- Coordinate the cleaning and tidy up of the craft areas afterwards.
- Store all the supplies neatly.
- Make sure that all the craft materials and scissors etc. are safe and non-toxic for children.
- Coordinate displays of art and craft work in the church when appropriate.
- Help to produce visual aids and illustrations for the service when they're needed.
- Etc...

## PRAYER COORDINATOR

The prayer coordinator needs to choose appropriate, creative, and simple prayer activities that enhance your worship and support the theme of your services. They can also coordinate prayers for the ministry.

The prayer coordinator needs to:

- Understand and believe in the importance of intergenerational worship.
- Understand the need for multisensory prayer activities that appeal to different ages, cultures, and learning styles.
- Make prayer practical and relevant for people of all ages.
- Find suitable creative prayers that fit the different themes of the intergenerational worship services.
- Source and provide any necessary materials for the creative prayer activities.
- Gather prayer requests, thanks, and praise in ways that can be shared with the whole congregation.
- Coordinate a team to pray for the intergenerational worship team and their plans and services.
- Etc...



## **COMMUNITY OUTREACH COORDINATOR**

The community outreach coordinator is an optional team member. This person helps the team find ways for their intergenerational services to have a mission to meet some of the needs of your local community. So they may be involved in publicizing your services to meet the spiritual needs of local families. Or they may help to coordinate the assembly and collection of personal care kits for homeless people, gifts for disadvantaged children, or shoes for Africa, etc. This person could also be your local community services leader or your communication leader.

The community outreach coordinator needs to:

- Understand and believe in the importance of intergenerational worship, and how mission can be a vital part of the ministry's vision.
- Develop creative ways to attract local people and families to your intergenerational worship services.
- Liaise with local charities, and organizations like ADRA, to find small projects that could be incorporated into your intergenerational services, like packing supplies, wrapping gifts, donating canned food, collecting small coins, etc.
- Provide clear information about the specific things the charities and organizations need, and exactly how local members can help.
- Provide the materials and/or coordinate the collection of supplies needed for any community outreach projects that will be part of your services.
- Coordinate the collection and distribution of any aid or care packages your church members create as part of an intergenerational worship service.
- Etc...

## **OTHER MEMBERS**

Other members, such as parents, children, teenagers, grandparents and singles are all useful people to have on your committee. They can give you instant feedback on your ideas, and help you to plan services that meet the needs of all the generations. Often they'll have amazing ideas that will really bring your services to life, and they'll also have spiritual gifts that you can include in the worships.

Other members need to:

- Understand and believe in the importance of intergenerational worship.
- Be willing to speak up and share their ideas and concerns in clear and supportive ways.
- Be available to help out when needed.
- Etc...

## **SURVEYING YOUR LOCAL SKILLS**

Lakeland Church is quite a large church, so when it decided to embark on its intergenerational journey it decided to survey its members and find out who had some of the different skills they needed. A checklist of skills, with a form for contact details, was included in the weekly bulletin for a month. This gave the worship team a bigger pool of people willing to tell stories, create props, help with the music, prepare suitable art and craft activities, develop creative prayer activities and mentor the children participating in the service.

## **INVOLVING PEOPLE HOVERING BY THE BACK DOOR**

Intergenerational worship can also strengthen those who may be on the borders of the church, such as teenagers and young people. Sometimes they are there because they prefer visual and kinesthetic worship experiences, so they struggle with the heavy bias towards verbal worship, which they experience in many churches. A fresh approach to worship can inspire them to stay and become involved.

Adam came to church occasionally with his wife and children. He'd been on the edge of the church community for several years. He was an art teacher and enjoyed being creative, and he found church dull and irrelevant. One week his wife, Lucy, was helping with the intergenerational worship program, and she was struggling to find a creative way to illustrate the Bible story. She started bouncing her ideas off him, and he started to get excited. Together they came up with a simple, non-messy art activity that anyone could do, and which perfectly reinforced the lesson.

Now Adam comes to church every week, even though their intergen-

erational worship is only once a month. He's responsible for finding an art or craft project for each all-age service that supports the theme for the week. Sometimes he makes props and backgrounds for the services. 'I feel needed now,' he says, 'I used to think my gifts were second rate, because I could never preach or teach. But now I'm passionate about helping people understand God through their creativity. And I'm much more excited about worship and developing my own faith, too!'

## **FAMILY TEAMS**

In one small church, families take it in turns to coordinate the monthly intergenerational service, inviting other people to help them in the areas where they feel less confident or skilled. Sometimes two families will work together to plan the service. Not everyone's musical,



so the same team leads out in the praise and worship each month. Sometimes they use DVDs of children's Christian songs, because these often provide the backing music, include the words on the screen, and demonstrate actions the children can copy.

## **INSPIRED BY THE WEB**

Another church has decided to make life easier for their worship committee by using and adapting intergenerational worship plans, which they can download for free from websites like [www.lightlive.org](http://www.lightlive.org) and

www.barnabasinchurches.org.uk. They found this a good way to get started because someone else had done all the hard work, and all the ideas had been tried and tested. Even though the programs needed some tweaking to fit their context, gifts and needs, it saved an enormous amount of stress and time. Some of the programs even came with scripts, handouts, visual props and sound effects!

There are other reasons for using 'off the web' materials. Kate's church started using programs they downloaded from the Internet, or found in books. As they did this, their confidence grew and their ideas developed. They were soon adapting some of the material in the programs and adding their own creative ideas. Kate said, 'we started using the material just to make our life easier, because we believed in intergenerational worship, but didn't really know where to start. The prepared materials were massively helpful in getting us started. Using the materials was like having on-the-job training! Now we pretty much create our own worships from scratch, but we know where to look if we're stuck for ideas.'

### **SOME THINGS TO THINK ABOUT...**

Who do you think God is preparing and gifting to be the intergenerational worship coordinator in your local church?

Who do you think God might be calling to help with the following aspects of intergenerational worship?

- Pastor/leaders
- Intergenerational worship team coordinator
- Story-teller/worship leader
- Music coordinator
- Technical coordinator
- Creative coordinator
- Prayer coordinator
- Community outreach coordinator
- Other members

How do you see an intergenerational worship team working best in your church?

# *Sixty Simple Ways to Involve Children in Your Church Service Right Away*



## **TEN WAYS TO INVOLVE CHILDREN IN THE CONGREGATIONAL PRAYER:**

1. Invite a group of children to write different sections of the congregational prayer and then pray them in sequence.
2. Invite older children and teens to create an attractive PowerPoint presentation to illustrate the different sections of the prayer, the people and situations being prayed for, etc.
3. Teach children over six years of age (some younger children can manage this too) how to pray simple prayers for other people in the congregation. Invite those who'd like the children to pray for them to put up their hands. The children can find them, ask about their requests, and then pray short prayers for them.
4. Invite a small group of children to act out the Lord's Prayer with actions (see Resources for instructions) or to teach it to the rest of the church.

5. Print off the following words, two to a page on different colored paper, so they can be cut in half:

Yellow paper: Praise

Blue paper: Sorry

Green paper: Thanks

Pink paper: Please

Stick one of each of the printed words onto a gift bag that's the same color as the paper. Place these at the front of the church. Give one set of the four different colored papers to each person in the congregation. Invite them to write sentence prayers on the papers. So they would write a sentence praise prayer on their yellow sheet of paper with the word 'Praise' printed on it, etc. Small children can draw pictures on their paper instead of writing sentences. Invite the children to collect all the colored papers and bring them to the front of the church. Then they can post them in the correct bag—matching the color of the paper to the bag. Pick up one bag at a time and present it to God as a congregational prayer. Then pull a few of the papers out of each bag and read them aloud, prayerfully. This is a useful way to involve everyone in the prayer.

6. The week before you want to do this activity, invite the children to search for objects that represent things they want to thank God for. Arrange all the objects on a table at the front of the church. Ask some of the children to tell the congregation why they chose the objects they brought along. Use some of their items in your prayer of thanks. Or ask each child to say 'Thank you God for...' whatever they brought along.
7. Ask the children to create attractive prayer postcards, decorating them with their artwork, or a simple collage. Send these cards to home-bound or sick church members to let them that their church has been praying for them, or write a short prayer on the card and post it to their home.
8. Pray a pray-dough prayer of confession. Give each person a piece of white playdough and invite them to make an object that represents something they want to ask God to forgive. Let them hold

the object in their hands as you pray a prayer for forgiveness. As you pray you can also invite them to squash their dough into a ball, and then form it into a pure, white heart-shape. They can take their heart home with them as a reminder that God can take all of our sins away forever, leaving us with lovely clean hearts again.

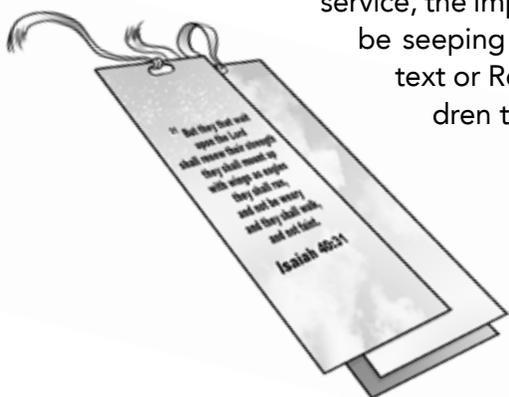
9. Find a small 'tree': a bare, twiggy, branch that you can place in a pot. Give everyone, including the children, green card leaves that have a hole punched in one end, and a short piece of raffia or string attached. Invite people to write the names of those who are sick and need healing onto the leaves, including some brief details of their illness or injury. The leaves can be brought forward and tied onto the tree, and the whole tree of healing prayer requests can be presented to God. The tree can have a place in the church, and, when healing has occurred, a coloured paper flower can be stuck to the leaf representing the person who has been healed. If someone dies a white flower can be attached to their leaf and talk about how healthy they will be when Jesus raises them from the dead.
10. Invite the children to write a praise prayer to God. Give them lots of large photos of nature scenes (such as those from calendars) and let them choose one and take it home. Ask them to write a sentence or two praising God for the things they can see in the picture. Then let them hold up their picture for everyone to see, and say their praises as part of your prayer time. Remember that it's alright for us to pray with our eyes open! God doesn't mind!

For more ideas see '100 Creative Prayer Ideas for Kids and grown-ups too!' Karen Holford, 2003, Pacific Press, available from the ABC.

## **TEN WAYS TO INVOLVE THE CHILDREN IN THE SCRIPTURE READING:**

1. A group of children could each learn one of the Bible verses in the passage, and then repeat their memorised verses in sequence to complete the Scripture reading.
2. Older children and teens could be invited to create an attractive PowerPoint presentation to illustrate the Scripture reading.

3. Ask children to read the scripture readings and then say a few words about what the passage means to them.
4. Invite some children to create a mime, or actions, to illustrate the scripture reading.
5. If the Bible passage is also a scripture song, a family or Sabbath School class could learn the song and sing it instead of reading the verses.
6. Ask the children to do a silent action each time certain words in the scripture are read, such as pointing to heaven when God is mentioned, or making a heart shape with their hands when love is mentioned, etc.
7. Older children could research the context for the passage and say a few words about the background to the verses before the Scripture reading.
8. Choose several children and give them different Bible verses from the scripture reading. Ask them to illustrate the verse in any way they like—a photo, some abstract art, a painting, etc. Photograph their work and use the pictures to create a PowerPoint presentation of the scripture reading.
9. Make a word-search puzzle using an Internet puzzle-maker site. Include the key words from a long scripture passage, or all the words from a shorter reading. As the children search for the words during the service, the important message from the scriptures will be seeping into their memory. Or create a coded text or Rebus version of the passage for the children to unscramble.
10. Help children to remember the scripture reading by giving them attractive, printed bookmarks of the key texts. Or let them hunt for the words of a text around the church, and hold them in the correct order



in front of the congregation. Use the theme of the text to suggest an activity that might involve the children.

For more ideas see '100 creative ways to learn memory verses' by Karen Holford, 2010, Autumn House Publishing.

### TEN WAYS TO INVOLVE THE CHILDREN IN THE OFFERING:

Even very young children can be taught how to help collect an offering. A supportive and helpful deacon can stand nearby if necessary. When we trust our children with an important and responsible task they feel very valuable.



1. A group of children could collect the offering under the supervision of a deacon or deaconess.
2. Collect the offering in attractive gift bags, to remind the congregation everything we have is a gift from God, and it's lovely to say thank you by giving something back.
3. Involve children in praying the simple prayer dedicating the offering to God. They can write a few sentences ahead of time and read the words aloud, or they could sing a song of thanks to God for the money.
4. Give each person a plain envelope. Ask them to write or draw something on their envelope that they want to say 'Thank You' to

God for. Then they can put their offering in the envelope and place it in the offering plate.

5. Use an interesting offering container for the children's offerings, and collect their money in it when they come to the front for their children's story. Or let the children take it in turns to find or make interesting offering boxes for their special offering
6. Give each child a plastic or cardboard tube, such as an empty denture tablet container. Ask them to decorate the tube and bring it back in a month's time filled with coins.
7. Supply children with their own colourful offering and tithe envelopes, or give them blank ones to decorate to celebrate the money they are giving back to God.
8. Some churches have a special offering that the children collect each month, and that money goes towards a local church project that will bless the children, such as a Holiday/Vacation Bible School event, or a special item for their Sabbath School rooms.
9. Invite children to design and decorate offering containers that can be used for a special church event, such as gift boxes for Christmas, or pumpkin shapes for Thanksgiving. Or maybe they could hunt for special collection boxes to match the themes of the sermons?
10. Ask the musicians to play quiet background music when the offering is being collected. During this time you can interview some of the children about the things they want to thank God for.

### **TEN WAYS TO INVOLVE CHILDREN IN YOUR CHURCH'S WELCOME AND BLESSINGS:**

1. Train children as part of your church's welcoming team. They are often very good at smiling and greeting people and they can easily give out bulletins and Bibles.
2. Children on the welcoming team can greet the other children who come to church. Children may prefer to be welcomed by other

children, and they can be given their own children's bulletin or sermon-related worksheet to encourage them to listen to the morning's message. They can also be offered a children's Bible to use during the service. Perhaps your church could purchase a set of colorful and interesting Bibles that have been especially designed for children

3. Trained children can be a part of the welcoming team at the opening of the divine service, and invite the church to enter a spirit of worship. They can work with a mentor to write out their words and practise them so that their welcome message is appropriate and clear.



4. Children can welcome visitors by giving them a small gift such as bookmark or a flower.
5. Every child can be paired with a senior member of the church and be given the responsibility of welcoming their 'adopted' grandparent to church each week, in a personal way. This can be done informally in the time between the services, or the child and older person can meet briefly after the service. It is best practice when a parent or guardian looks out for their own children to make sure they are safe when relating to other church members.
6. Children can help your church deaconesses distribute the flowers from the Sabbath arrangements to those in your congregation who will be blessed by them.

7. If your church serves drinks and snacks after a service, two children a week could be involved in helping to pour drinks and collect cups or tidy away afterwards.
8. Station a trained older child by the church doors to say goodbye to the children leaving after the service, and to say something encouraging and appreciative to each child.
9. Think about how your church manages the benedictions and blessings at the end of the service. Try different ways of involving the children in these times. Adults can stand and hold hands in a circle around the children as they are blessed, or lay hands on them.
10. Children can receive a special short prayer of blessing during the communion service. As the adults are being served the children can wait in line to be blessed by a person who is good at communicating with children. Encourage the person to give each child a different and personal blessing.

## **CHILDREN AND SERMONS**

If you ask many children in our churches today what they like and don't like about church, most of them will say that the worship services are boring and there is nothing for them, except perhaps a children's story. In many churches they are expected to sit perfectly still and listen to things they cannot understand for an hour or so. The experience of most of the children in our churches each week is one that is potentially *anti-evangelistic*. Here are some ways to make the sermon time in a traditional church service more interesting for the children.

### **TEN WAYS TO INVOLVE THE CHILDREN IN THE SERMON:**

1. As you write your sermon, think about how the children will hear what you say and which points will be most relevant to them. Pray that the Holy Spirit will inspire you to find fresh and creative ways to involve the children in your sermon. If you find it hard to be creative, ask your local children's ministries leaders to help you come up with different ideas, or contact your Mission, Conference or Union Children's Ministry leaders for help with ideas and resourc-

es. Please give at least two weeks' notice before your service if you are asking a busy person to help you.

2. Tell the children's story during the sermon. This can break up the long sermon time for the children and give them something to listen out for. Otherwise they can often find it very hard to listen to a long sermon as they have usually learned that nothing else happens for the children in a church service once their story has finished.
3. Be creative about involving the children in the theme of the service. If you are telling the story about Noah you could hide plastic animals in 7s and 2s around the church for the children to find. These could then be placed inside a large ark—a cardboard box would be fine! Gift-wrap objects that help to tell your sermon and invite the children to open them. One pastor places a surprise object in a special bag that he takes to church each week. The children can't wait to help him open the bag during the sermon! Each week the object is chosen to help the children learn how much God loves them.
4. Ask a teacher or scientist to involve the children in a science or nature experiment as an illustration during the sermon time.
5. Use attractive photographs to illustrate your sermon PowerPoint slides so that you keep the children's attention. Hide the picture of a small object in more than half the slides. You can choose an image that is relevant to the sermon theme, such as stone, lamp, coin, etc. Ask the children look carefully at the pictures and count how many hidden objects they can find.
6. Create a simple worksheet that is linked to the sermon theme and give it to the children for them to complete during the sermon. This helps them to think about the sermon, and many children actually listen better when they are doing something else at the same time. There are many books of Bible worksheets that you can photocopy for children. Your Children's Ministries Department may be able help you to find worksheets for specific ages and themes. Or search Google images to find Bible story worksheets that you are free to copy.

7. Just before the sermon hand out a small ball of play-dough to every child. Crayola's Model Magic is clean, non-messy and soothing on the skin. Invite the children to model something that relates to the sermon or to make a scene from the Bible story. Display the models after the service and encourage the adults to talk to the children about what they made. The models can be taken home to dry out and be kept, or the dough/clay can be returned to a sealed container to be used during another service.
8. Give each child in your church a special Spiritual Memory box. This is a place where they can collect items that are spiritually significant to them. Each week choose a small and inexpensive object that has a link to your sermon, and give one to each child as they leave church. Make the connection between your message and the item very clear, and remember that under-sevens may find it hard to understand abstract meanings for objects. You could give out a large nail when talking about Jesus' death, a small piece of map or tiny compass when talking about how God gives us direction, a tiny smiley person when talking about joy, etc. Encourage the children to use the boxes during their own worships and family devotional times to remind them of God's loving care. A notebook can be added to the box so that they can write down what each item represents, and other ideas they may have.
9. Give older children a piece of squared paper and a pencil and ask them to create a simple cross word or word search puzzle using the key words in your sermon, plus other words that they hear you use. Or ask them to make a word search using as many words as possible from your key texts. This helps them to concentrate on what you are saying and helps them to remember the important parts of your message.
10. Dress a few children as the characters in your chosen Bible story and help them to create tableau scenes to illustrate the story. You could also give them cards with clearly written words for them to speak at the appropriate moment. Interview the children about how they would feel if they were the different characters, to add another dimension to the Bible story.

## TEN WAYS TO INVOLVE THE CHILDREN'S ARTISTIC GIFTS IN YOUR CHURCH:

Whenever you involve the children in your church in an artistic project, supply them with good quality materials. Provide clip-boards if they'll be drawing in church so that they will have something to lean on. Use quality, pure white paper, not the back of recycled copy paper, or paper that is tatty and torn. Fresh marker pens, sharpened crayons, pencils and other good materials are more likely to inspire the children and show that their art-work is truly valued by the church.

1. Invite the children of your church to take it in turns to design the cover of your bulletin. If you photocopy in black and white ask them to do a simple pen and ink style design. If you have color bulletin covers for special occasions, then the children can draw, paint and create collages that can be scanned into your computer. Encourage the children to work with a safe adult who can mentor them as they create their design. Or ask the children to create different designs to suit your different sermon topics. When visitors see that you welcome and value the children they will know that they are more likely to be welcomed and valued too.



2. Encourage your children's leaders, and any graphic designers or artists you have in your congregation, to work with the children to create seasonal collages and thought-provoking posters for your church's external notice-board.
3. Let the children design envelopes for special offerings, especially offerings that will be used to help children. They can draw their designs on ordinary white envelopes.



4. Ask the children to design welcome postcards for your church, or cards to be sent to people who haven't been able to come to church for a while, or those who are ill. Give them plain white postcards and ask them to draw something on the blank side. You can ask them to write an appropriate Bible verse on the card, too.
5. If the Scripture reading has been chosen several weeks ahead of time, an artistic child or teenager can be asked to create a picture that illustrates the reading. This can be scanned into the computer and made into an illustrative PowerPoint slide which can be shown when the scripture is read. Interview the child about how they chose to create their picture and what the scripture means to them. This has the added advantage of encouraging the child to think more deeply about the Bible passage.
6. Invite someone who is good at sewing and design to help the children create a banner to be used in your church on a weekly basis, or for special occasions. There are several books of banners you can use as inspiration, or surf the net for Christian banner designs or witness t-shirts with simple, thought-provoking slogans that can be adapted to create a banner.
7. Children can boost your church building fund by designing a calendar that can be sold. There are computer programmes and printing companies that can incorporate 12 of your children's scanned pictures into a calendar format. Encouraging Bible verses can be included in their designs to create a witnessing tool, as people will often buy these to give to friends, neighbours and family members.
8. Children often listen better to a sermon when they have something to do. Ask them to draw a picture that illustrates one of the messages in the sermon. At the end of the service let the children

place their drawings on a bulletin board where others can see their work. Encourage the adults to look at what the children have drawn and to search for any new thoughts and inspiration in the children's drawings.

9. If your church has a website, include some of the children's drawings in a gallery on the site. This will encourage the children, their family members and friends to visit your site. If you keep your site interesting and up to date the visitors may also discover what else your church is doing, and be encouraged to come along.
10. Nominate a gifted adult to mentor the creative and artistic talents of the children and youth in your church. Encourage them to look for ways in which children can use art to deepen their spiritual understanding and experience, and to develop workshops where children can design Scripture bookmarks, witnessing T-shirts, greetings cards, banners, etc.

(Many of the ideas in this chapter first appeared in the BUC Messenger, 2007 – used with permission.)

# *Sample Intergenerational Worship Service*



## **GIFTED! SONGS**

- Choose songs about gratitude and building up the body of Christ, or love, etc.

## **SCRIPTURE READING**

- Read 'The Parable of the Talents' from Luke 19:11-26. Invite a group of teenagers or young people to mime the characters in the parable while it's being read, or to act it out with a king, servants and a narrator.

## **ILLUSTRATION**

- Wrap a collection of gift boxes and make large labels to stick on the side of each box that will face the congregation. On each label write the name of a different spiritual gift from Romans 12 or 1 Corinthians 12. Stack them up so that everyone can see them. Explain

that these are the special gifts that God has given to your local church. But He's given them all to different people! Hand them out to different people in the congregation. Then ask questions like 'What would happen if the people holding the gifts didn't want to use them, and didn't want to share them with others? What effect would it have on our local church? What would happen if everyone who had a gift opened it up and used it and shared it with everyone else?'

- Another option is to make and wrap the same boxes, but to put in each box one of the different ingredients for a special recipe, like cookies. After you have asked the questions, have everyone with a box open it and put their ingredient on a table at the front of the church. This shows that everyone's gift is different, but vitally important to the recipe of love that the church wants to make. You could also have someone make heart-shaped cookies, following this recipe, prior to the service. These can be shown as the result of all these gifts working together, and then eaten with a meal after the service, or taken home, etc.

## **OFFERING**

- Collect the offering in sturdy gold gift bags or attractive gift boxes.

## **INTERGENERATIONAL CONNECTION**

- Invite people to find someone of a different generation and tell them about one of the best presents they were given, and why it was so special.
- Or use the gift tag closing activity for a time of intergenerational connection.

## **'GIFTED' PRAYERS**

- Gather together a collection of items that represent different gifts that people might have:
  1. Music – a musical instrument (or use the church piano or organ)
  2. Singing – a pile of songbooks
  3. Teaching – a blackboard
  4. Caring for others – large heart or basket of food

5. Generosity – A large gift-wrapped box
  6. Healing/promoting health/caring for the sick – a first aid box
  7. Writing – a pile of books, a desk, or a laptop computer
  8. Art – an easel with a picture on it
  9. Encouragement – poster of encouraging words
  10. Hospitality – a table set for dinner
  11. Comforting – a box of tissues or a cozy blanket
  12. Making others happy – large smiley face
  13. Etc.
- Arrange these around the room ahead of the service, to remind people of some of the different gifts we have that we can use to bless others. At prayer time, invite people to move and stand by one of the gifts they think they have. As part of the prayer, thank God for everyone's gifts.

Or

- Wrap a large box in attractive gold gift-wrap. Give each person a sticky label. Ask them to write on their label a 'Thank You note' to God for a special gift He has given them that helps them to share His love with others. Then let them stick their Thank You labels all over the large present. Read a few of the notes as part of the prayer during the service.

## **TELLING THE BIBLE STORY**

- Retell the parable in a fresh new way.
- You need four characters – a father, a teenage son about 16, a daughter about 12, and a younger boy about 8.
- You will also need to find and gift-wrap 8 useful woodwork tools, such as a hammer, saw, pliers, screwdrivers, etc. plus some nails, and some pieces of wood; 4 useful kitchen tools, such as a bowl, wooden spoon, apron, bread pan, and a bag of flour; also wrap a small garden spade and a packet of tomato seeds in one gift package. Make one large box for a power tool and one for a kitchen mixer. You can just stick pictures on the outside of an ordinary box, and then wrap them up.
- A father has to go away for a while, so he calls his three children and gives each one a stack of presents.

- The eldest one, a teenage boy, is given 10 gifts – the 8 different tools, the nails and the wood, each separately wrapped—let the younger children help to open them, but be sure they do so safely as tools can be heavy and sharp.
- The daughter is given 5 kitchen items – again, let the younger children help her to open them.
- The youngest son is given 1 package.
- The older son looks at his gifts, excitedly, and wonders what to do. Invite everyone to suggest what he could do with these gifts that would help his family and other people.
- Then the daughter looks at her gifts, excitedly, and wonders what she can do. Again, invite everyone to suggest how she could use these gifts to bless her family and other people.
- When the youngest son sees what his brother and sister were given, he thinks he will just have another boring present. He doesn't bother to open it—he just hides it under his bed. You could set up a camp bed to illustrate this if you wish.
- Show the brother and sister making things with their gifts, both for their home, and to sell to others. Show examples of simple woodwork and loaves of home-made bread.
- They can even 'sell' them to people you have prepared in the congregation, and receive large pretend coins—he collects 20 coins and she collects 10 coins.
- Then their father comes home and he's delighted to see what they have done! He admires the woodwork and gives his son a brand new power tool!
- He tastes the delicious bread and gives his daughter a brand new food mixer!
- Then he asks his youngest son to bring some nice tomatoes from the garden for him to eat with the bread. But there aren't any nice tomatoes. Father is concerned, because he gave him the seeds and a spade. Finally the son remembers the package under his bed. He and his father are sad that he didn't open the present and grow the tomatoes. But dad understands that he's young and he needs some help, so they go out together to learn how to plant the seeds in the garden.
- Then ask some questions and invite people of all ages to respond. Accept every answer warmly.
- Who do you think the father represents?

- Who do the children represent?
- What do their presents represent?
- What do you like best about the story
- What's the most important message in the story for you?
- What gifts has God given you, and how are you using them?

### **QUESTIONS FOR ADULT REFLECTION**

- What spiritual gifts has God given to you?
- If you have more than one—which gift do you enjoy using the most?
- How has He used your gifts to bless others?
- How has using your gifts blessed you?
- What might happen if you don't use your gifts to build up and strengthen your local church, or to reach out to others?
- What new ways of using your gifts to bless others can you think of?
- How will you specifically use each of your gifts to encourage others in the coming week?

### **CLOSING ACTIVITY/BENEDICTION**

- Give each person a large gift tag.
- Ask them to find someone who knows them quite well – children can go to their parents or accompanying adults.
- In pairs, write on each other's gift tags: 'I thank God for the gift of ... that I see in your life.' Insert the name of the gift into the tag.
- Return the tags to their owners.
- Say a prayer of blessing/benediction, blessing each person's gifts and asking God to help them to use them to share His love with others.

### **TAKE-AWAY ACTIVITY**

- Give each person a small tube of sweets, or other treat in a sturdy container that can be used to collect money.
- Invite them to collect enough coins to fill their tube and then bring it back to church next week.
- Give the collected 'gifts' to a special project that will bless others in your community, or buy a chicken or goat for a family in the third world, to gift them with the ability to earn a living.

## OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES

- Invite people to bring an object that represents one of the gifts that God has give to them. Arrange them on a large table and encourage people to wonder which gift each object represents, and also who might have that gift.
- Give each person a sheet of paper. Ask them to find a partner, or let them sit with their families, or make a group with the people along their row. Once in groups, invite them to make a symbolic/pretend present out of the sheet of paper to give to the person on their right. They must try to give them something rally special that will make them happy. Allow 5-7 minutes for them to make and give their paper presents. They can also explain why they chose to make that specific gift.



**LINDA, I REALLY DON'T KNOW WHERE YOU WANT ME TO PUT THIS IMAGE... IT WAS SAID TO BE ON THIS CHAPTER, BUT I COULD NOT RELATE IT TO ANYTHING.**

# *How Did It Go? Inviting And Managing Feedback*

THE INTERGENERATIONAL SERVICE is over. The last few people are trickling away from the fellowship hall where themed refreshments were served.

You sit on a chair, quiet and tired, but happy. You did it! Your team worked hard and the service went smoothly... on the whole. There was just the time when one of the children got so excited about your creative offering containers that he emptied all the money onto the floor! But he was happy, and it was soon gathered up again.

Now is the time for your team to reflect on the service... while the ideas and experiences are still fresh in your mind...

## **QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT:**

1. Which of our objectives did we meet, and how?
  2. Which of our objectives didn't we meet, and why?
  3. What went especially well?
  4. What was unexpected or surprising?
  5. What did we learn?
  6. What will we do differently next time?
  7. What other questions do we need to ask ourselves?
- Take the time to write down the answers to these questions individually, while everything is still fresh in your mind.
  - Then share what you've written with the rest of your team the next time you meet. This makes sure that everyone's voice is heard and important details aren't forgotten and lost.
  - Collate your answers and keep them on file, so that you can refer back to them if necessary.

## COLLECTING FEEDBACK FROM YOUR CONGREGATION

It can be daunting to invite feedback from your congregation, especially after your first few intergenerational services, when you're still building your confidence and your church is still getting used to the concept and the changes. It's important to keep the feedback in perspective. It's easy to feel overwhelmed by one person's sharp criticism, instead of focusing on how many people enjoyed the service. We do need to hear how people are experiencing the services, but we mustn't give up because of one or two critical voices.

**\* For extra help managing the critical people see the chapter 'The Big Questions about Intergenerational Worship.'**

Manage your feedback by asking positive-focused questions such as:

- What three aspects of the service did you enjoy the most?
- What was the most important message you took away with you from the service?
- What one thing would have made the service even better for you?
- What would you tell your best friend about this service?

## CREATIVE FEEDBACK

Trying inviting feedback in fun ways. Here are some ideas:

- Use the theme of your service to inspire creative feedback. For example: invite people to respond to the story of The Lost Sheep by giving each person a sheep sticker as they leave the service. Then create a series of four green paper fields which have been labeled with different numbers of smiley faces and the descriptions listed below:

4 – I enjoyed it a lot

3 – I enjoyed it

2 – It was Ok

1 – It was not as enjoyable as I hoped it would be

Invite everyone to put their sheep in the field that best describes their response to the service.

- Or give everyone a small object, like a button, a stone, or a toy brick. Provide containers labeled with the different activities. Ask each person to drop their object in the box labeled with their favorite part of the service.
- Design a simple response card and invite people to tick or color in boxes that express how they feel about a service, or which part they liked best and why.
- Publish the theme of next month's service and ask people to share what they would like to see in the service, so they can help to shape the direction of the services.
- Use the bulletin as a feedback form. Print a feedback section on the back of the bulletin, or design the bulletin so that people can colored in shapes, or circle numbers, to indicate their responses to different aspects of the service.
- Play a response game with the children after the service, perhaps in the fellowship hall. Ask them which part of the service they enjoyed the most:

A – creative prayer

B – the songs

C – the interactive Bible Story

D – the crafts, etc.

Allocate each letter to a different corner of the room and ask the children to move into the corner that represents the activity they enjoyed the most. Add other questions and ask them to move again. Make sure someone is counting the children to give you an idea of their responses.

- Video interview people leaving the services to get their responses. Watch these videos as a planning team, or use some clips to help you create a video advert for your next service.
- Keep a suggestion box available for anyone who wants to submit an anonymous suggestion or comment.
- Start a gratitude board where people write one thing they want to thank God for that they experienced in the service.
- Make an Inspiration Tree on a bulletin board. Invite people to pin notes on the tree that describe one piece of inspiration they are taking away from the service, etc.

SOME THINGS TO

# *Talk About:*

WHAT OTHER CREATIVE IDEAS DO YOU HAVE FOR INVITING FEEDBACK ABOUT YOUR SERVICES?

WHO WILL BE APPOINTED TO RESPOND TO THE MEMBERS WHO ARE CRITICAL AND DISTRESSED BY THE NEW STYLE OF SERVICES?

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE BEST WAYS TO HEAR AND SUPPORT MEMBERS WHO ARE UNCOMFORTABLE WITH INTERGENERATIONAL SERVICES?

# *Recipe for Making a World*

(CREATION SERVICE ILLUSTRATION)

THIS IS A FUN ILLUSTRATION that makes a serious point. Read it through and make it your own. You will need a large sturdy table for the tank and for the small bowls of all the different 'ingredients' so that your story runs smoothly. You will also need some buckets of water under the table and a match to light the floating candle. You can even keep your words in a large mysterious recipe book as a prompt! It doesn't even matter if anything goes wrong—it just adds to the general experience of disaster!

- Take one very large container and make sure it is safe. (Use a large, clear plastic box or fish tank, etc.)
- First add some light. (Place a lit floating candle or bath light in the box.)
- Secondly, add lots of water, lots and lots of water. Then add some stones, rocks, sand and pretty gems and things. (Pour in lots of water so tank is at least half full. Candle or light should be floating.)
- Thirdly, we need some dry land. Let's add some big rocks. (Add rocks and other glass gems and little stones. From now on let the children help by adding different ingredients.)
- Then add grass, and flowers, and vegetables and fruits and green things. Then stir it around a bit. (Add grass cuttings, bits of chopped fruit and salad etc. and a little green food coloring—enough to tint the water green but still keep it clear.)
- Fourthly, add a large shake of stars. (Use star sequins/confetti bits.)
- And a son, anyone got a son? You'll do! (Choose small boy.) Oh no, SUN. Sorry. I think the sun's a bit big and dangerous, so we'll just leave that out.
- Fifth – we need to add some fish and some birds. We don't have any birds, they're a bit difficult to catch, so we'll just add a few feathers, that should be alright. (Add colored feathers.)
- Six – we need to add some animals. (Throw in some plastic animals.)
- And a couple of people. They look happy enough. Oops, Oh dear,

they've sunk. They haven't learnt to swim yet. (Use two plastic smiley people.)

- Never mind. Well there we have it. (Stir it with a big wooden spoon.) One world, all ready to live in. Who'll be first? Doesn't it look nice? You don't think so. You mean you don't like my world?
- What's wrong with it? It's got all the proper ingredients! I wonder why it hasn't turned out very well.
- I Know—I bet it's because I left the sun and moon out, or because the birds weren't real...? Or the people couldn't swim? Or maybe we should have baked it a bit?
- What do you think?
- Yes, you're right! It's because I'm not God. When I try to do things without God, I just make a big mess of my life and when we try to live our way, and we don't take care of the things God made, then we make a big mess of His world too.
- Never mind—here's one I made earlier. This looks more like it! (Large inflated globe)

# *The Lord's Prayer With Actions*

USE THE ACTIONS described below as you say the words of the Lord's Prayer.

- Our (point both hands to the chest)
- Father (hug own body)
- Who art in heaven (raise both hands upwards)
- Hallowed be thy name (place hands together in prayer)
- Thy kingdom come ('pull' heaven down out of the sky to your chest with both hands)
- Thy will be done (with elbows into your side touch your shoulders with both hands at the same time—left hand to left shoulder, right to right—then lower both hands down, as if offering them, stopping when your hands at a 90 degree angle out in front of the body)
- On earth (spread hands out and down towards ground and around, indicating the earth)
- As it is in heaven (spread hands up and around to indicate heaven)
- Give us this day (start with hands out in a receiving position, then draw them inwards and close the fists at the same time)
- Our daily bread (using left hand as a piece of bread, use right index and middle fingers together to perform the action of spreading butter back and forth across the left hand)
- And forgive us our trespasses (use both hands in a motion of flinging something down and away)
- As we (point to self with both hands)
- Forgive those (repeat forgiving action above)
- Who trespass against us (clench both fists, and bang the right one down on top of the left one, as if hammering it once)
- And lead us not into temptation (Keeping fists closed, cross wrists as if they are tied together)
- But deliver us from evil (pull wrists apart as if being suddenly freed)
- For Thine is the Kingdom (place both hands on your head, with fingers pointing upwards, to make a crown)

- The Power (use both arms to show biceps in a power action)
- And the Glory (lift arms together over head, and bring them down and out to each side to form a glorious circle)
- Forever and ever (arms move in two steps, out to each side simultaneously, as if drawing a rounded sort of M-shape with your hands)
- Amen (hands come together in prayer)

(Adapted from '100 Creative Prayer Ideas for Kids and Grown-Ups too!' Karen Holford, Pacific Press, 2003.)



# *Useful Resources for Intergenerational Worship*

## **USEFUL BOOKS**

- '100 Creative Prayer Ideas for Kids and Grown-Ups too!' Karen Holford, Pacific Press, 2003.  
Lots of prayer ideas suitable for intergenerational worships. They are grouped by prayer focus, and indexed by type of activity, location, and age-appropriateness, etc.
- '100 Quick and Easy Worship Activities for Kids' Karen Holford, Pacific Press, 2004.  
100+ interactive and multisensory worship activities for younger children. Many of them can also be adapted for older children and intergenerational use. Also includes devotional thoughts for parents, which can inspire your intergenerational service talks and sermonettes.
- '100 Creative activities for Sabbath,' Karen Holford, Pacific Press, 2005.  
Lots of activities for Sabbaths. Some of these may inspire your intergenerational worship, or provide ideas for follow-up afternoons, picnics, etc.
- '100 Creative Ways to Learn Memory Verses,' Karen Holford, Review and Herald, 2009.  
This book contains almost 200 ideas for learning Bible verses, because every idea has at least one alternative activity. Some of these can be used as part of your intergenerational worship experience, as ways to present Bible verses, or as activities to reinforce the scriptural message.

- 'All-Age Services,' Bob Hartman, David C. Cook, 2009.  
Bob Hartman is one of the world's best Christian story-tellers. He organizes story-based intergenerational worship services in his home church. Here he provides everything you need to run 12 services, with increasing amounts of creative activity. An invaluable resource that teaches you how to run intergenerational worship services and provides full programs to get you started.
- 'All-Age Worship,' Lucy Moore, The Bible Reading Fellowship, 2010.  
A useful book with lots of practical help and ideas for planning and leading intergenerational worship services.
- 'Multisensory Worship', Sue Wallace, Scripture Union Publishing, 2002.
- 'Multisensory Prayer', Sue Wallace, Scripture Union Publishing, 2000.
- 'Multisensory Church', Sue Wallace, Scripture Union Publishing, 2009.  
The Multisensory books by Sue Wallace are packed with road-tested ideas from her multisensory church services. They are very inspirational and packed with useful tips and ideas for all ages.
- 'Pick 'n' Mix – Over 100 Ideas to Create Programmes for Children of All Ages. Judith Merrell, Scripture Union Publishing, 1997.

## USEFUL WEBSITES

### [www.familyworship.org.uk](http://www.familyworship.org.uk)

Resources and support for churches wanting to create intergenerational worship services. Creative PowerPoint presentations to download with songs illustrated with beautiful pictures.

### [www.lightlive.org](http://www.lightlive.org)

Website with thousands of intergenerational worship ideas and resources. Program outlines, prayer ideas, creative scripture reading and Bible story-telling, suggested songs, crafts, scripts, handouts, and sound effects etc.

### **[www.barnabasinchurches.org.uk](http://www.barnabasinchurches.org.uk)**

Website of simple, practical ideas that can be used in intergenerational worship, plus books and other resources that may be helpful.

### **[www.engageworship.org](http://www.engageworship.org)**

A website of useful and creative worship resources.

### **[www.wingclips.com](http://www.wingclips.com)**

Christian website that helps you find short film clips that you can use to illustrate your service or message. You can preview the clips and find them on your own DVDs, or YouTube, or pay a small amount to download a clip from the site.

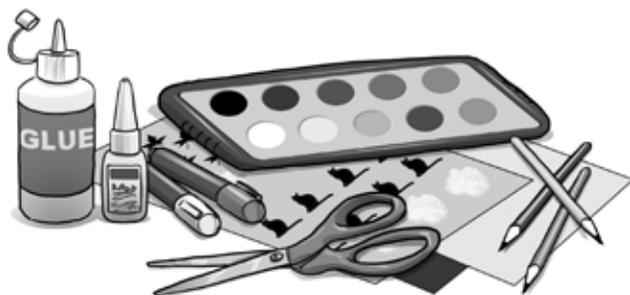
## **CRAFT AND SMALL GIFT SUPPLIERS**

### **Oriental Trading**

[www.orientaltrading.com](http://www.orientaltrading.com) – US based supplier of crafts and small gifts. Masses of ideas and resources and a large selection of inspirational crafts, costumes, props and materials that can help you create exciting visual illustrations etc.

### **Baker Ross**

[www.bakerross.co.uk](http://www.bakerross.co.uk) – UK based provider of good quality, simple craft activities, often individually bagged. Also includes small toys and gifts suitable for giveaways and prizes or story illustrations. This is a general educational supplier, but it also has many crafts suitable (or adaptable) for church use. Also has a small supply of Christian crafts.



THE END







